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Yokouchi

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(54) **LIQUID SUPPLY DEVICE AND LIQUID EJECTING APPARATUS**

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(73) Assignee: **Seiko Epson Corporation**, Tokyo (JP)

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(51) **Int. Cl.**
B41J 2/175 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **347/85**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 347/65, 347/66, 84, 85; 141/2, 18
See application file for complete search history.

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(74) *Attorney, Agent, or Firm* — Workman Nydegger

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A liquid supply device includes: a supply pump which is provided in a liquid supply passage; a first unidirectional valve which is provided on an upstream side of the supply pump; a second unidirectional valve which is provided on a downstream side of the supply pump; a first member; a second member; and a flexible member. The supply pump and the first and second unidirectional valves are formed such that the flexible member is interposed between the first and second members and held by locking a locking unit in the state where the flexible member is interposed between the first and second members.

9 Claims, 15 Drawing Sheets

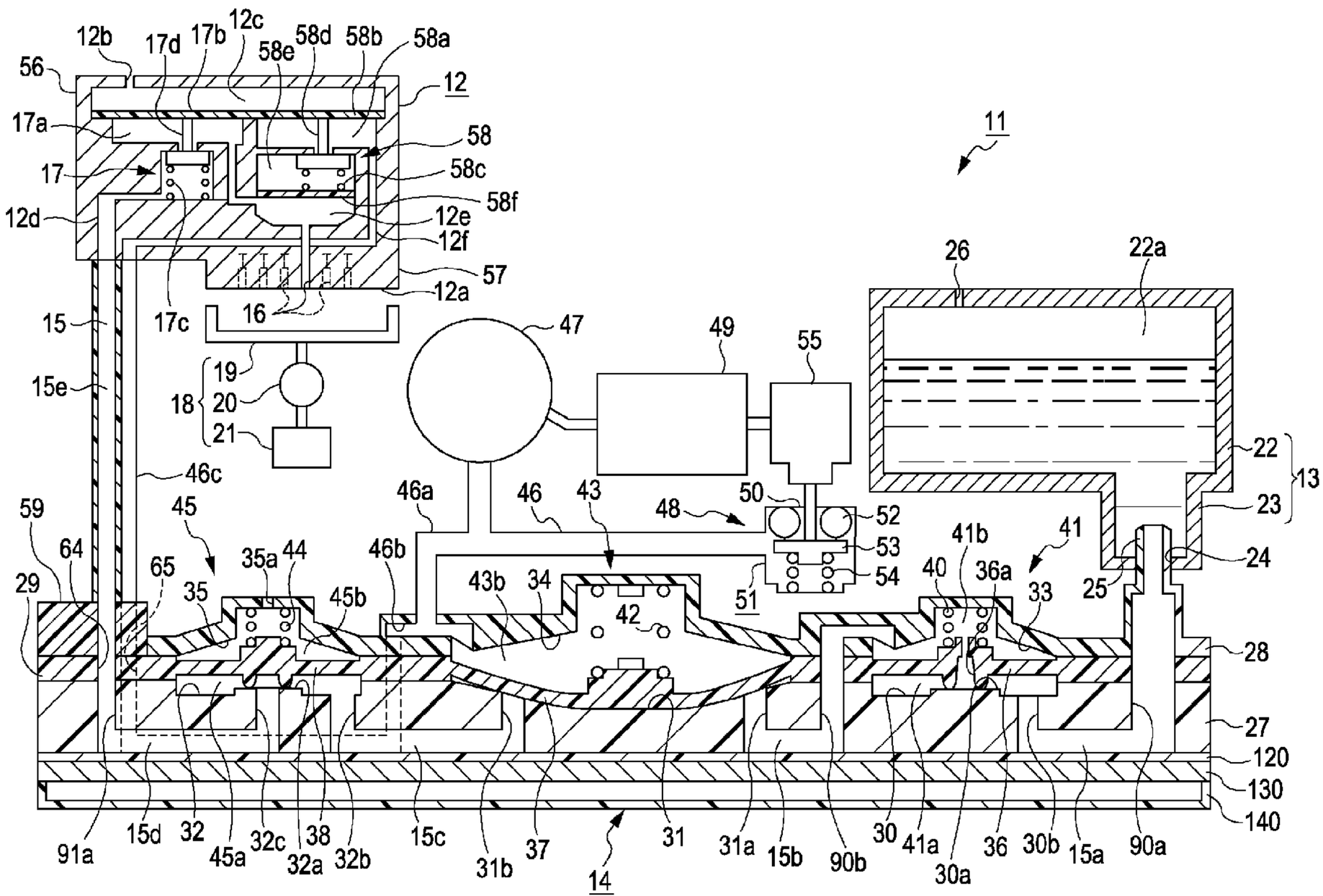
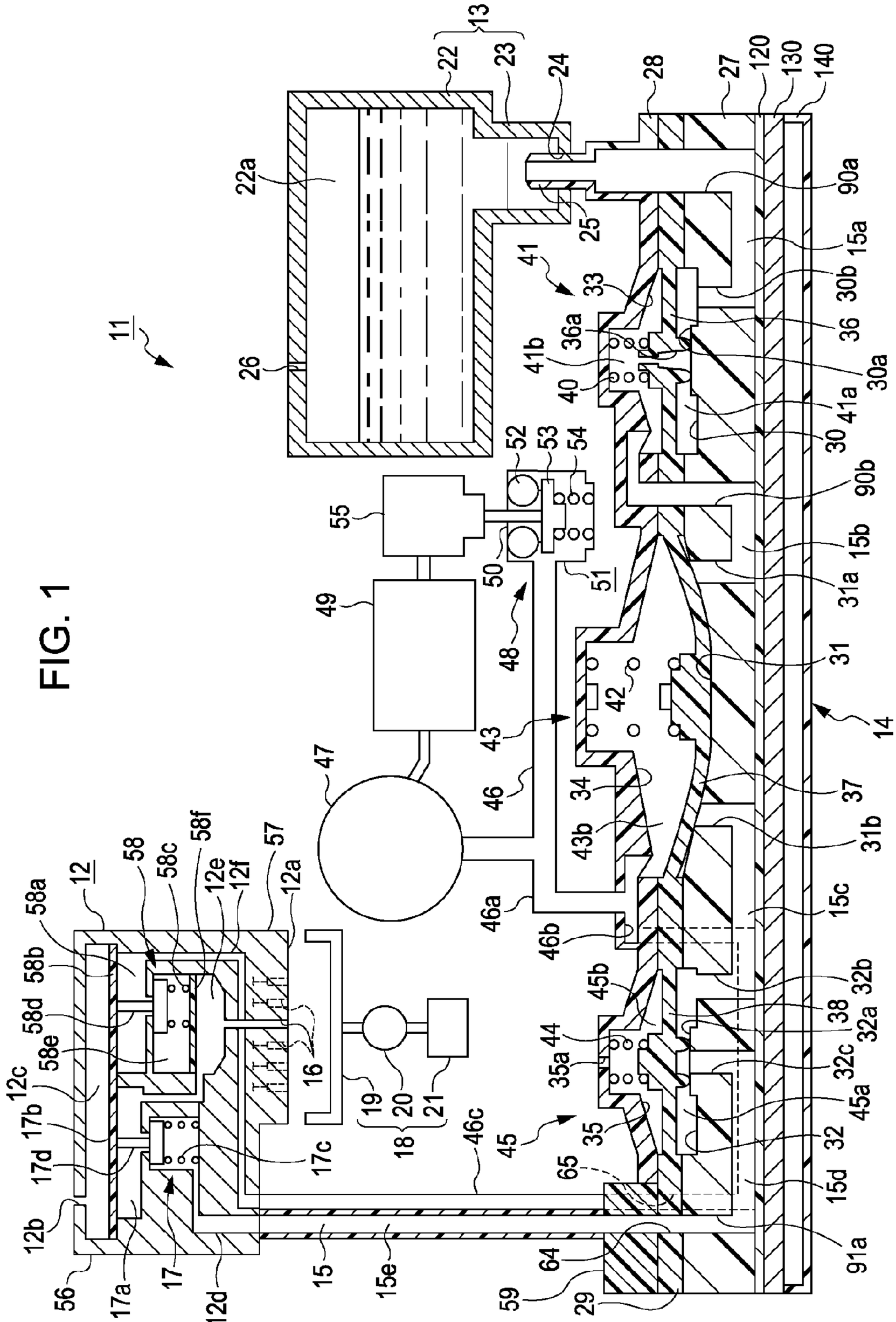


FIG. 1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91a
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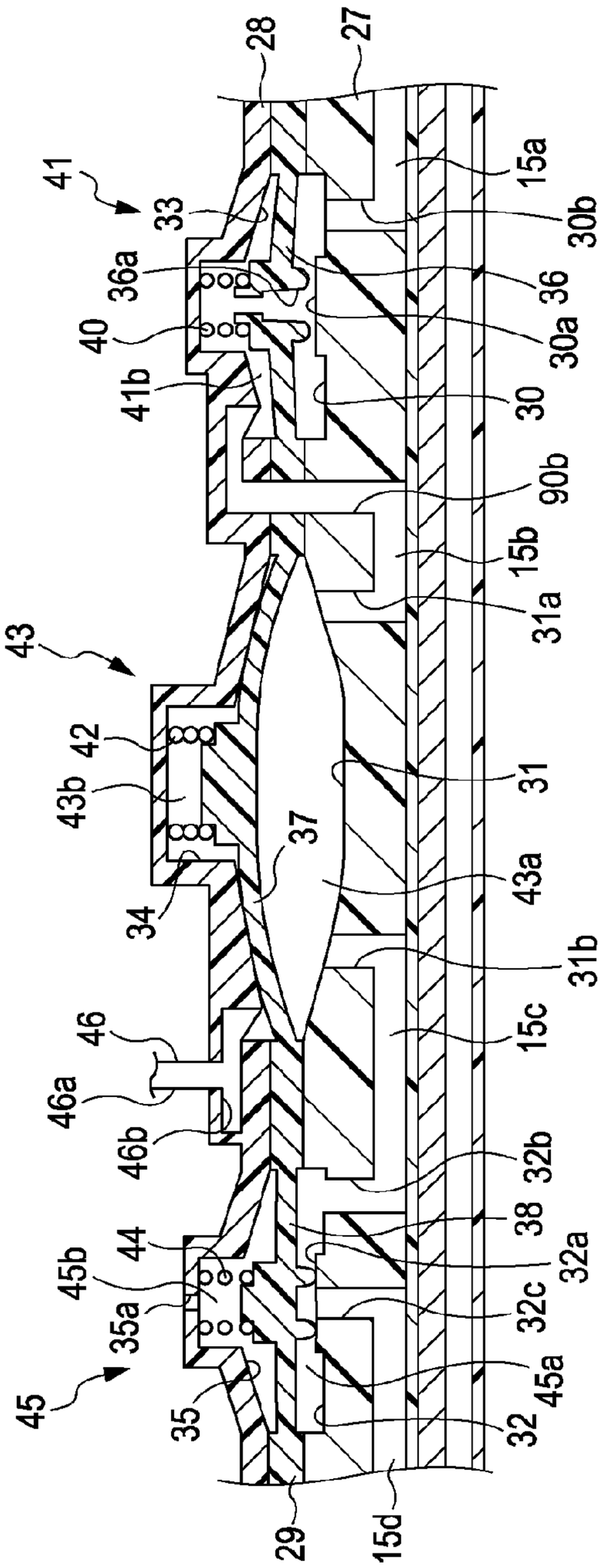
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37
43a
34
31b
46
15c
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32a
35a
32c
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35
45a
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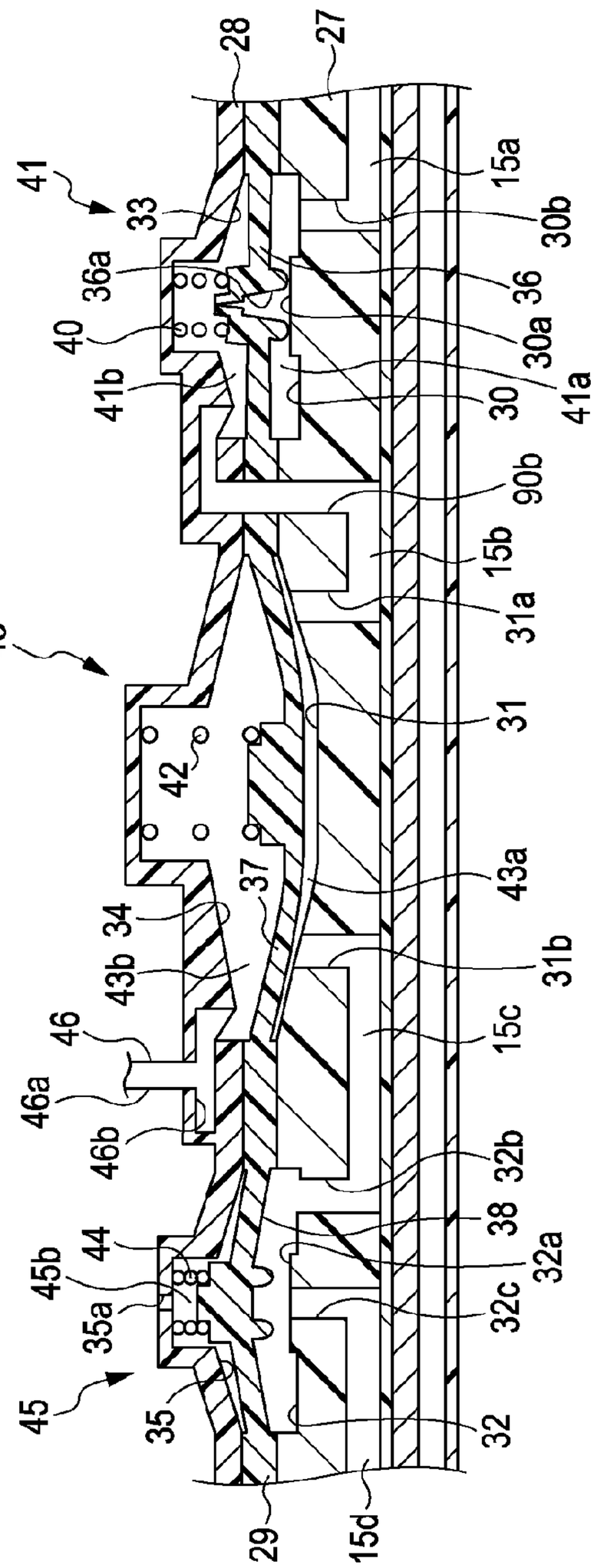
29
15d

FIG. 2A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37
43a
34
43b
31b
46
15c
46a
46b
32b
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45b
44
32a
35a
32c
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35
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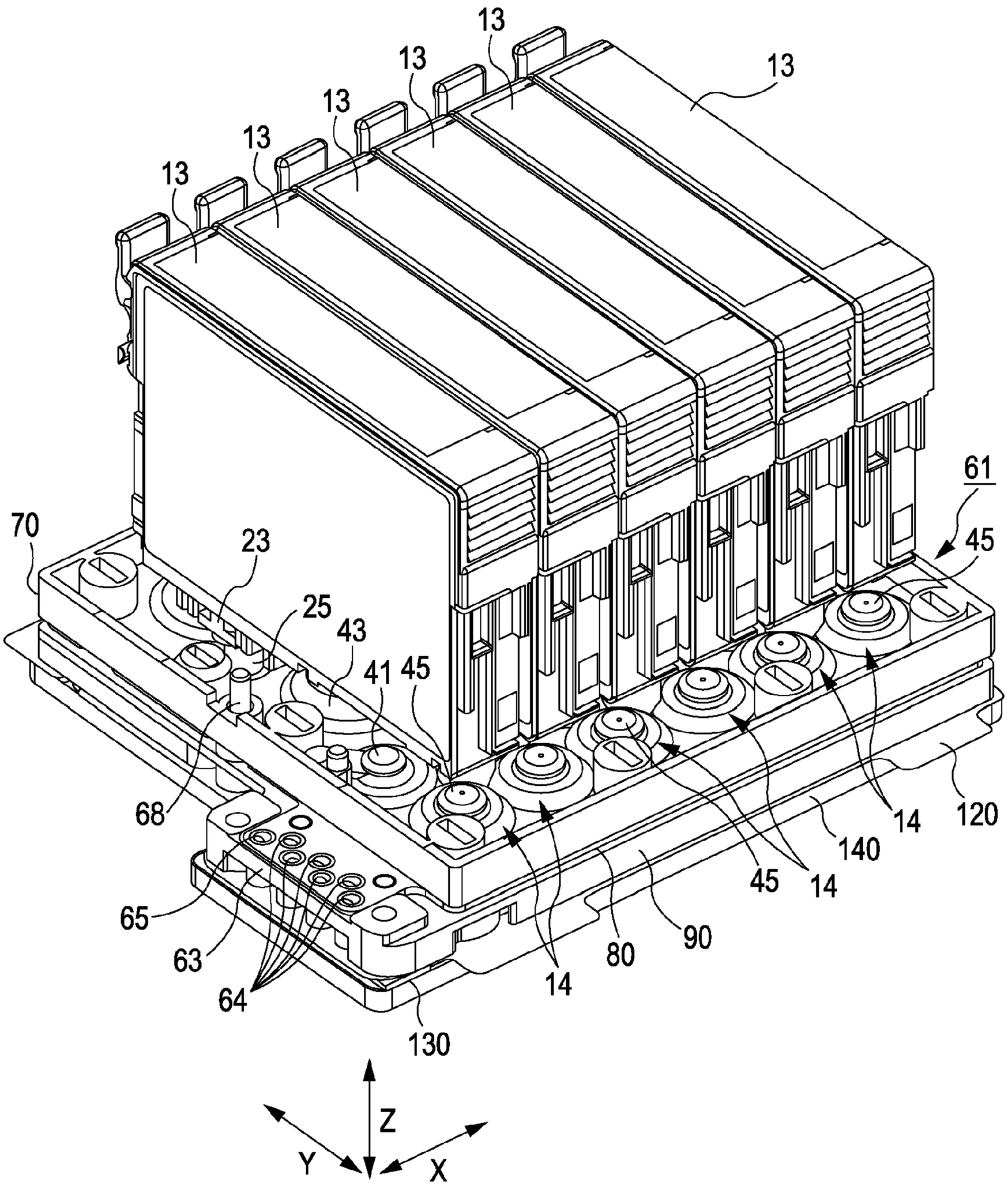
15d

FIG. 2B

FIG. 3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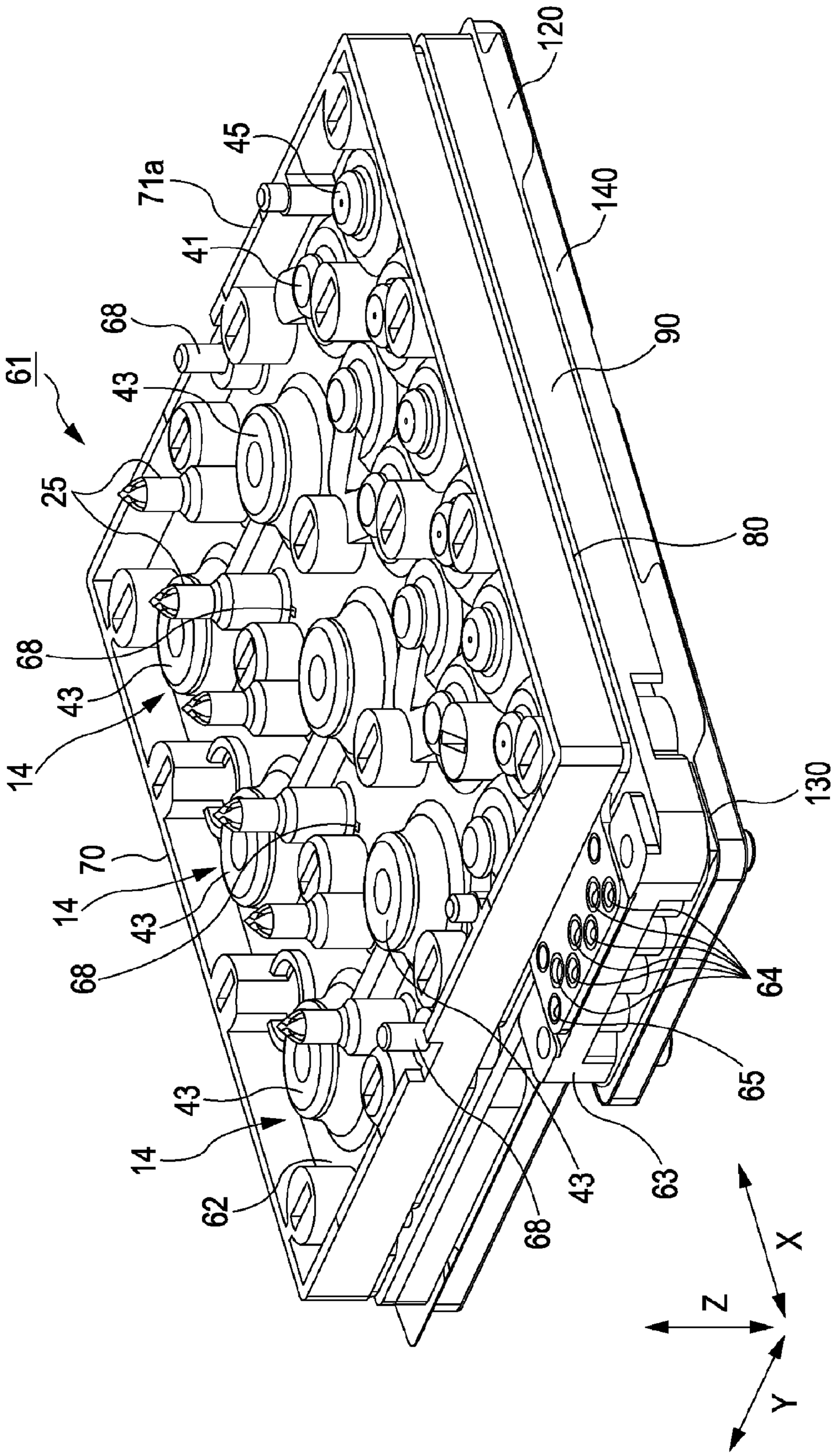
Z
Y
X

FIG. 4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63
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68
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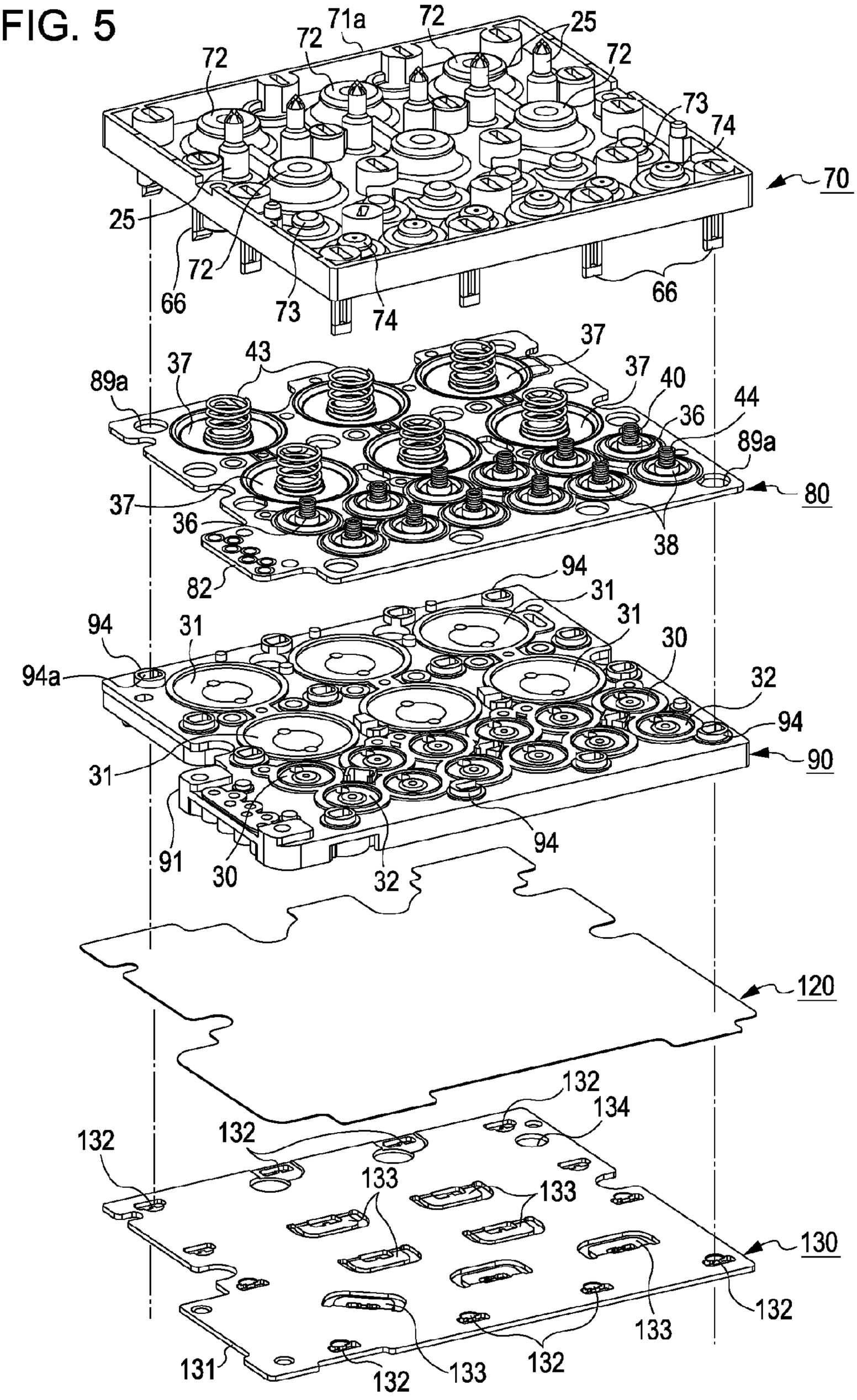
X
Z
Y

FIG. 5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82
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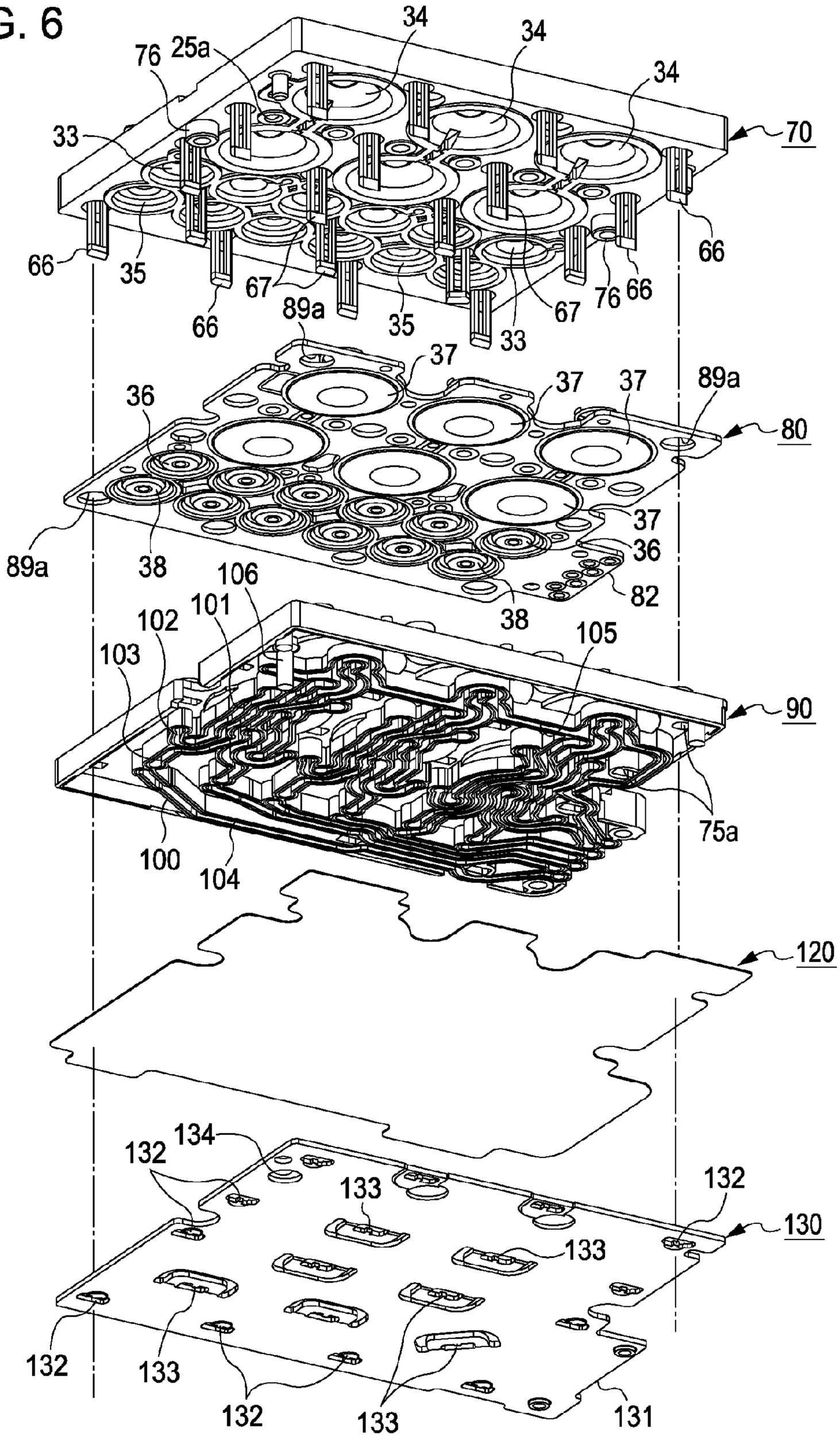
90
91
94a
120
132
134
133
131

FIG. 6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36
80
89a
38
37
36
82
38
106
101
102
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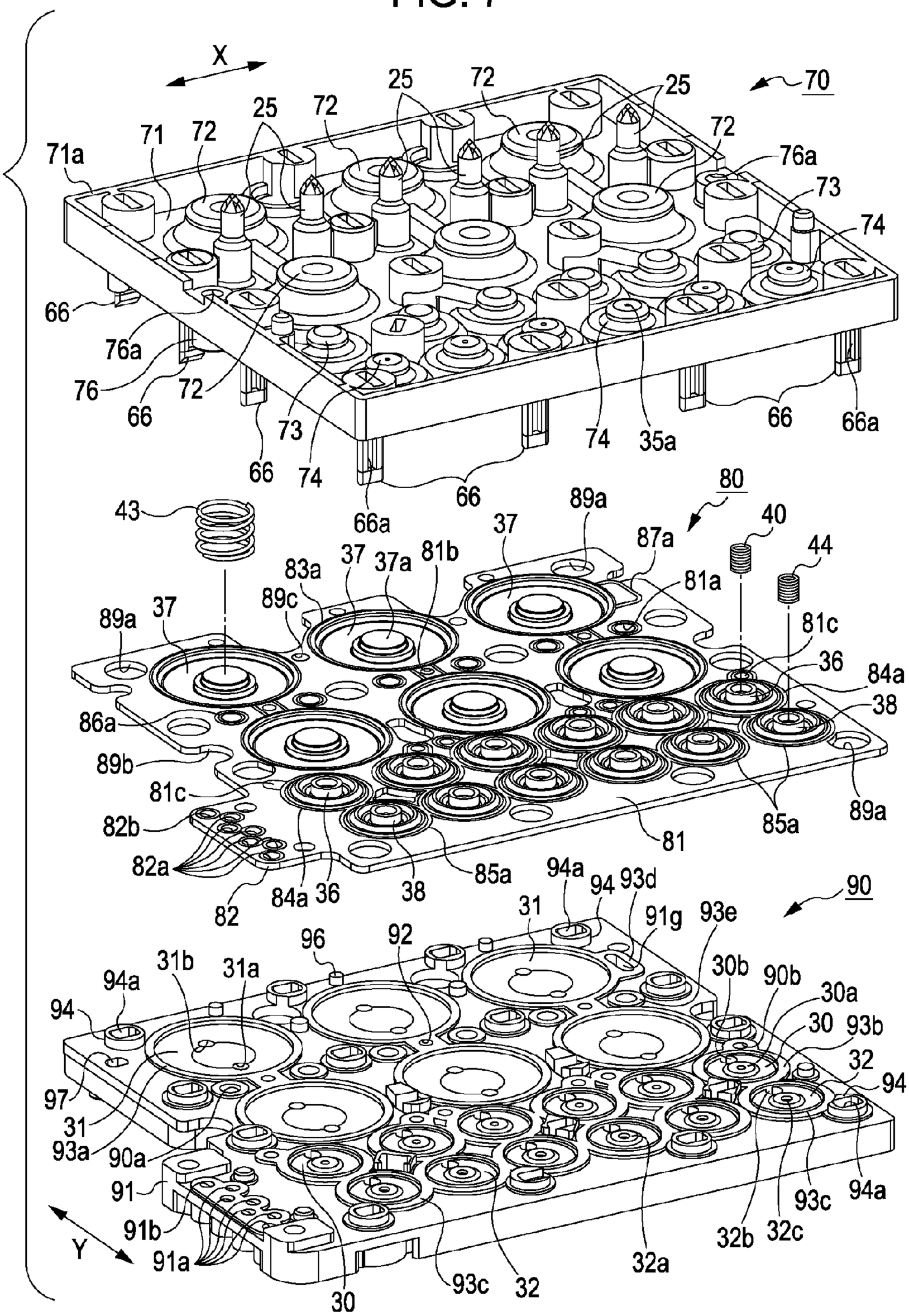
FIG. 7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81b
83a
89c
87a
40
44
81a
81c
36
84a
38
86a
89b
82b
82a
81
85a
82
84a
94a
94
93d
90
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91g
93e
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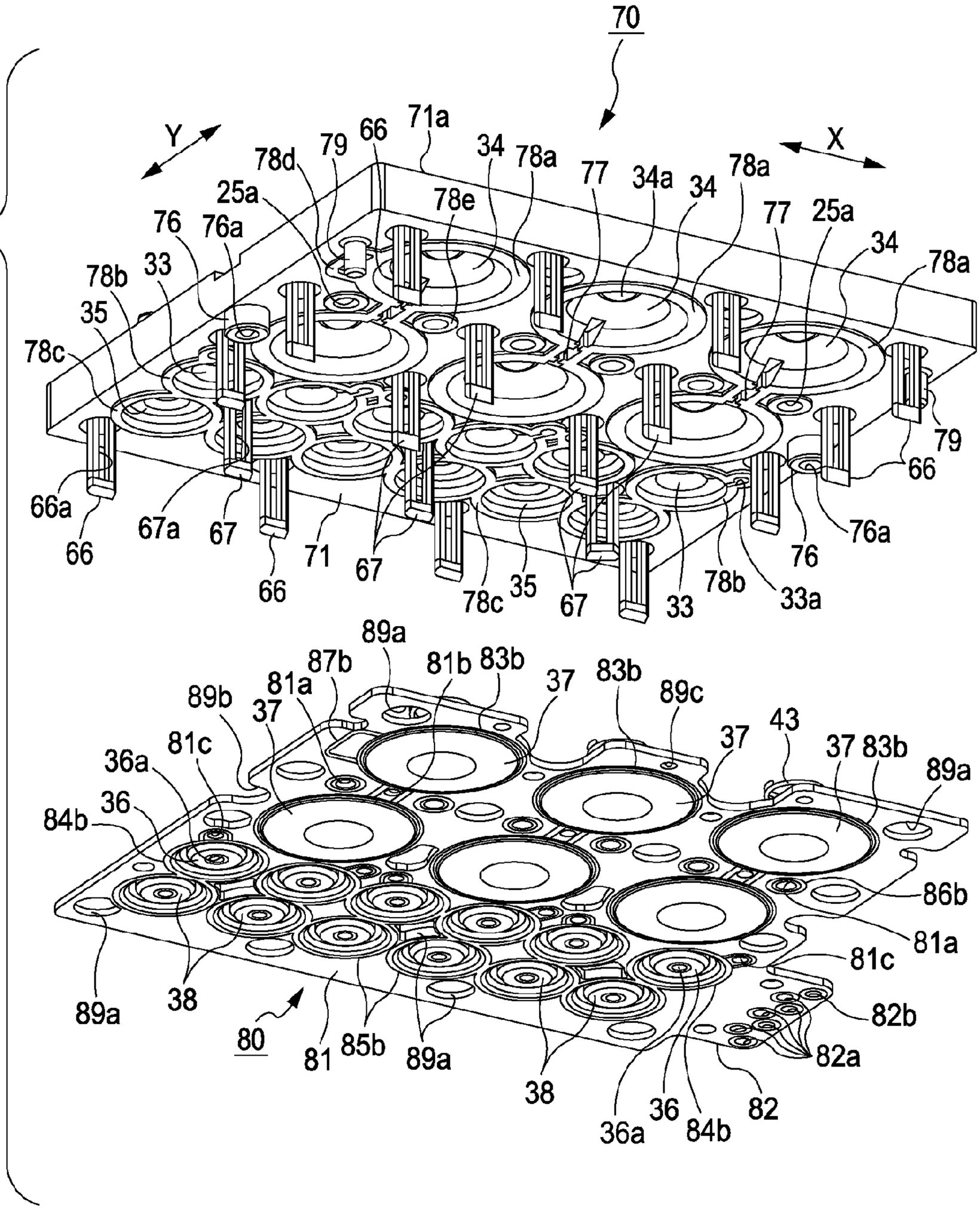
FIG. 8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76a
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78b
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78c
66a
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67a
67
66
71
67
78c
35
67
33
78b
33a
76
76a
66
79
89a
87b
81b
83b
37
83b
89c
89b
81a
37
81c
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84b
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84b
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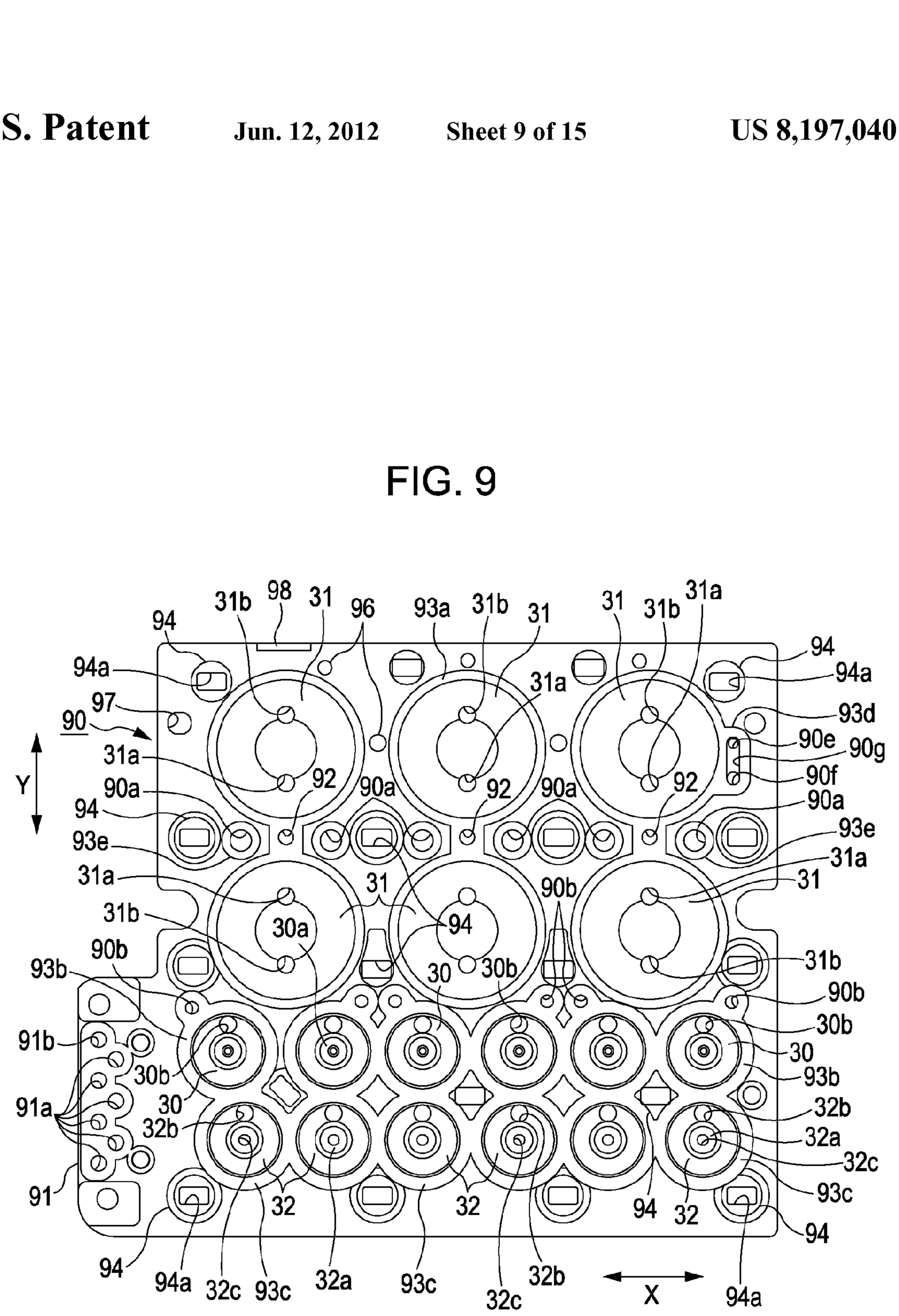
FIG. 9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94a
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32c
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90a
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90a
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90a
31
30a
94
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30b
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93d
90e
90g
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93c
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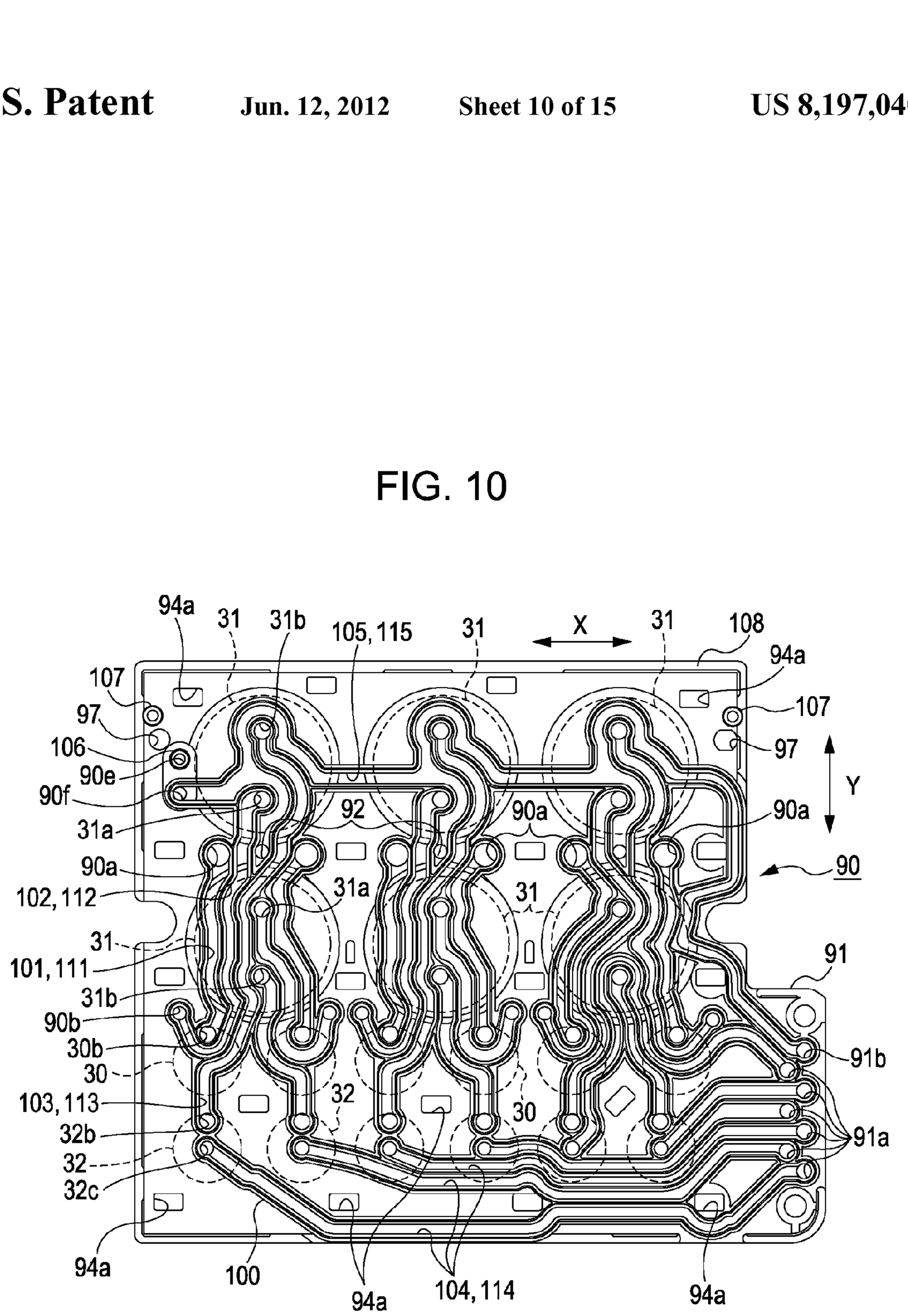
FIG. 10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101, 111
31b
90b
30b
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103, 113
32b
32
32c
94a
100
94a
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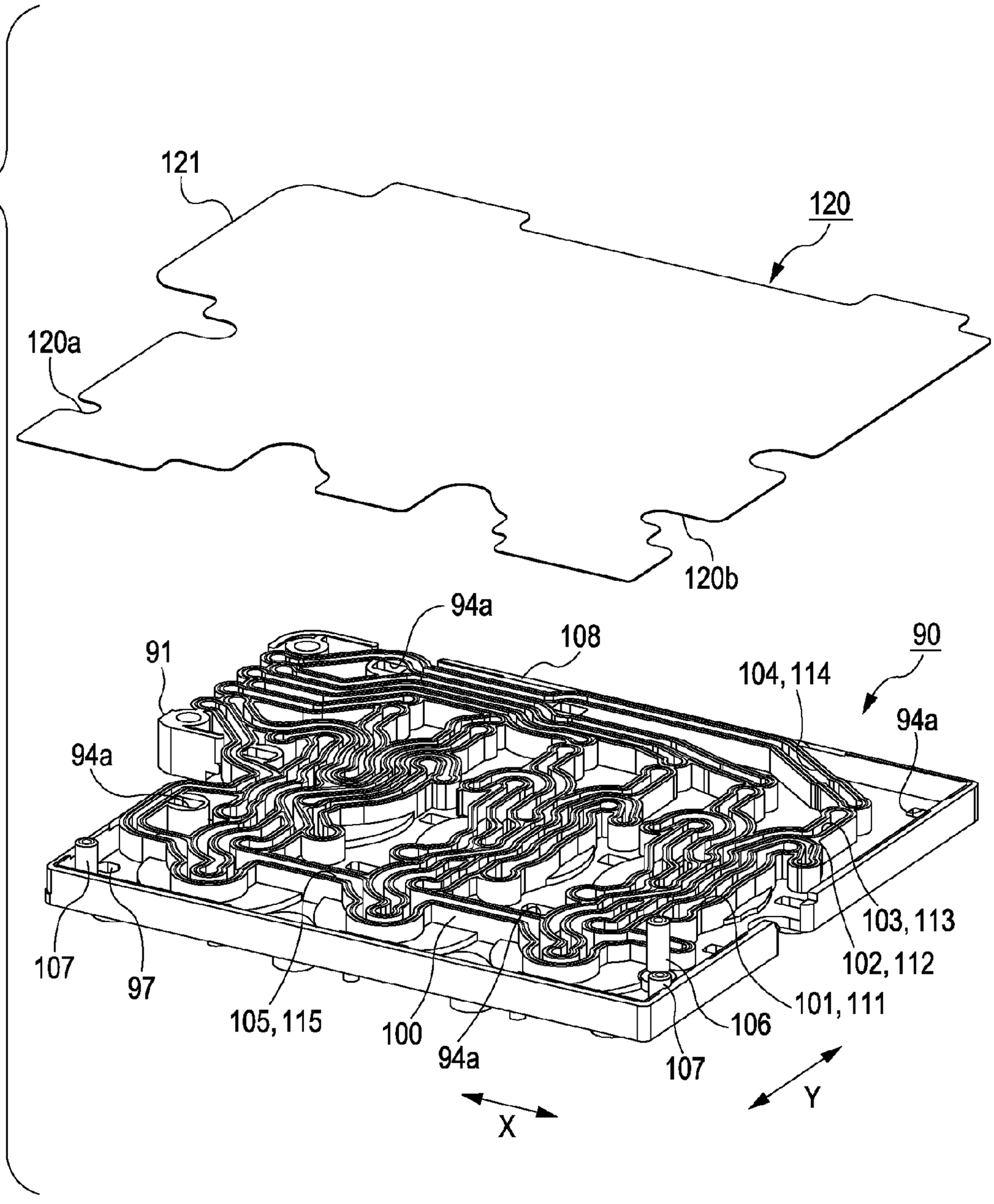
FIG. 11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X
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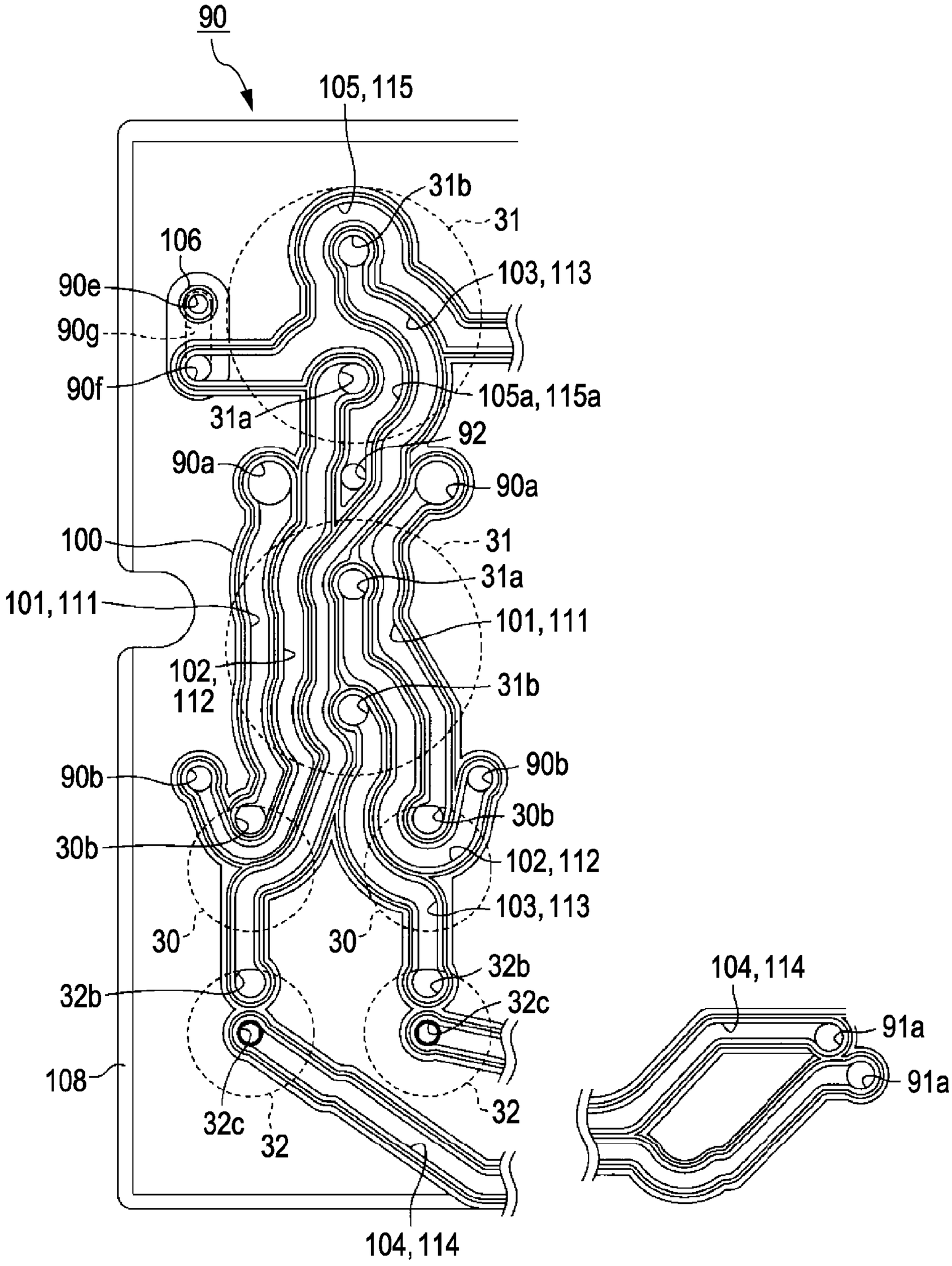
FIG. 12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30b
102, 112
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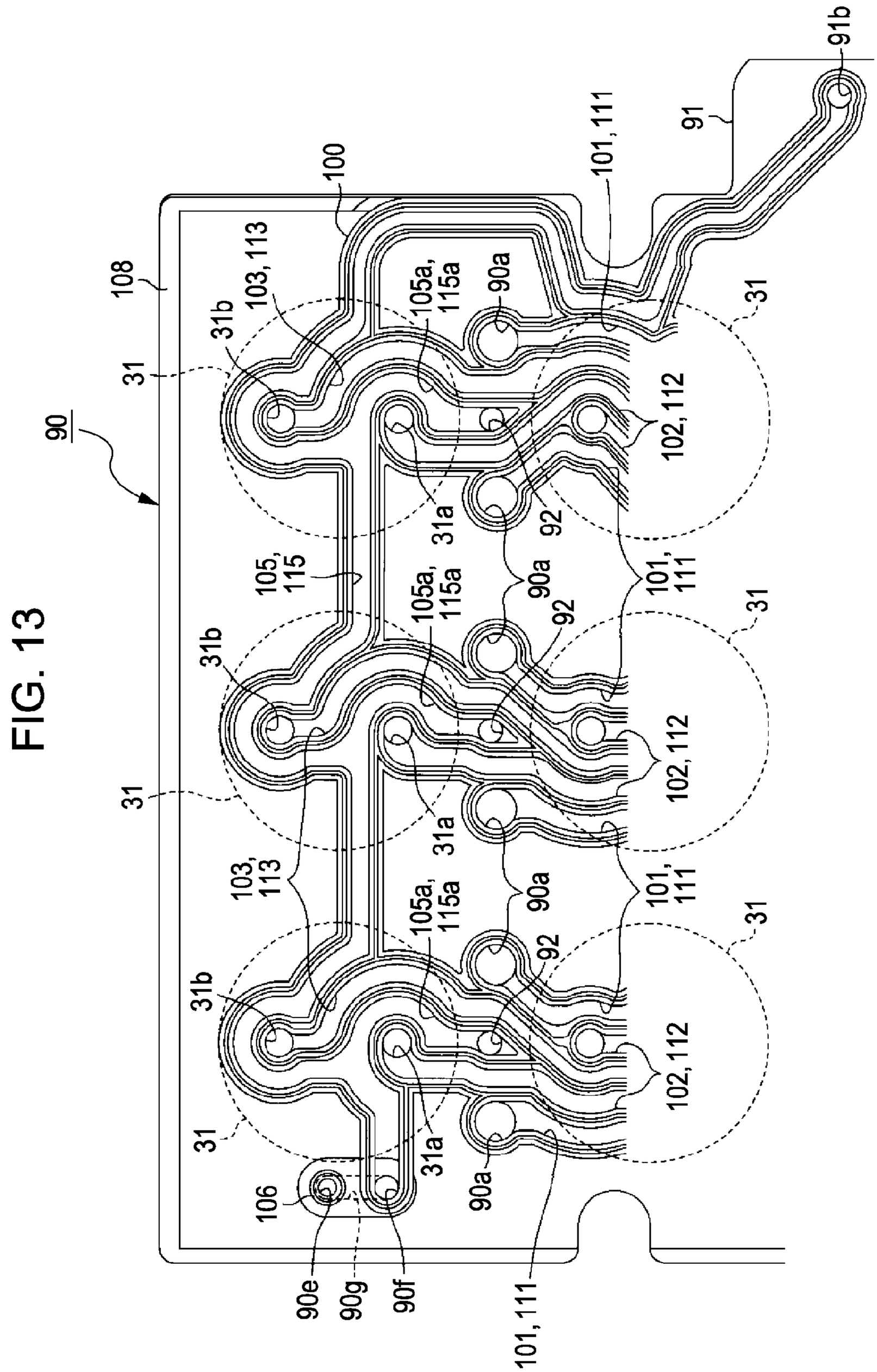
104, 114

FIG. 13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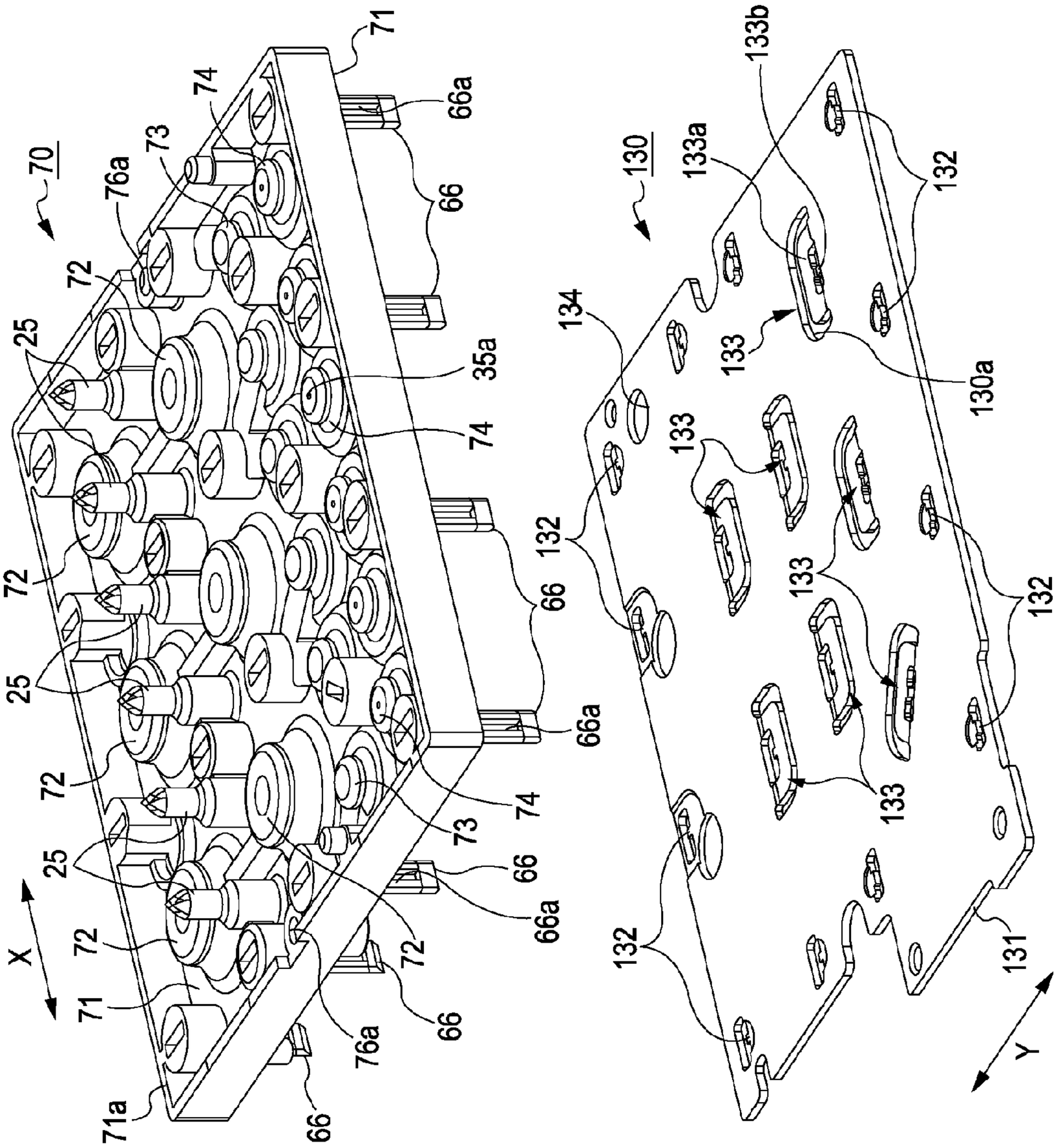
90e
90g
90f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133b
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130a
131

FIG. 14

FIG. 15

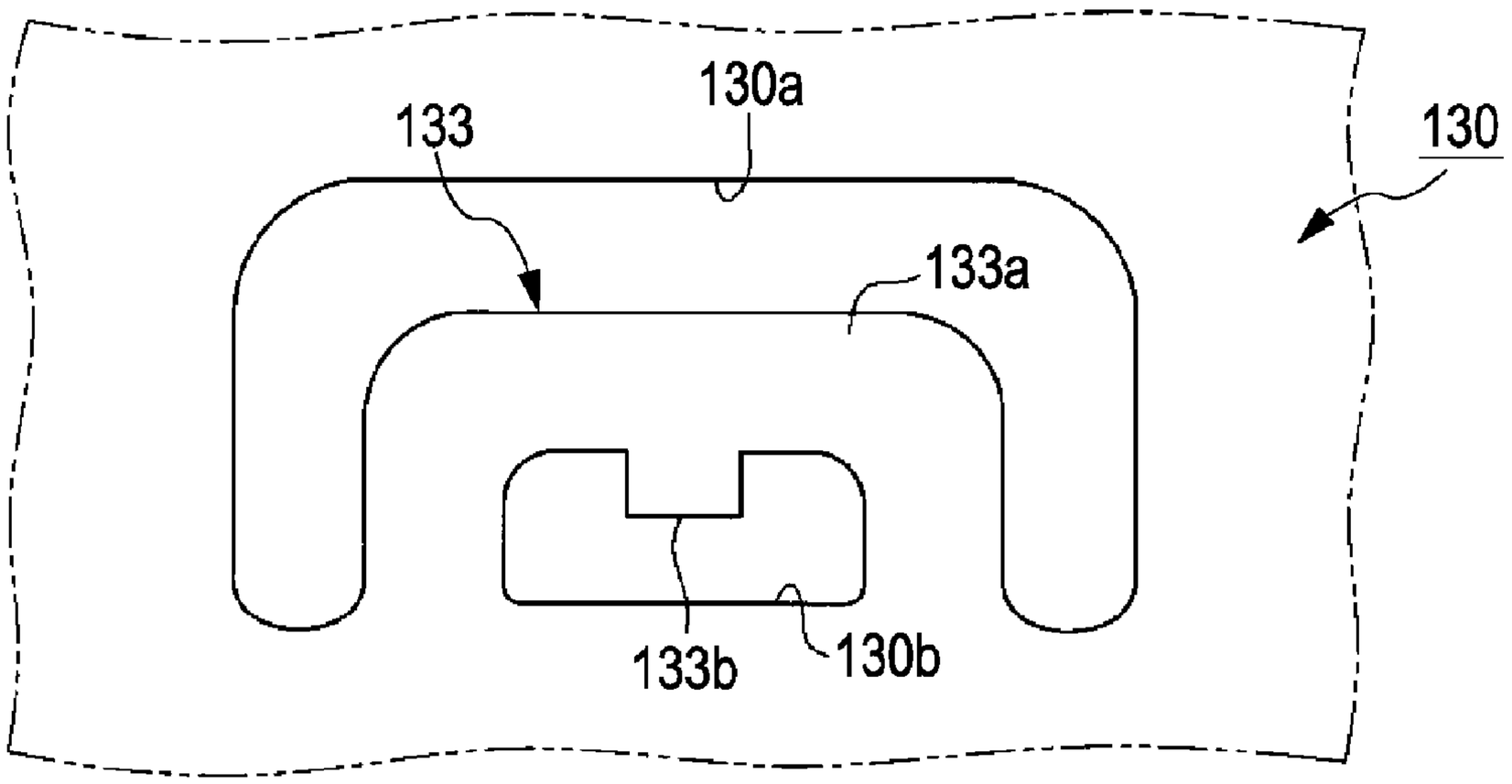
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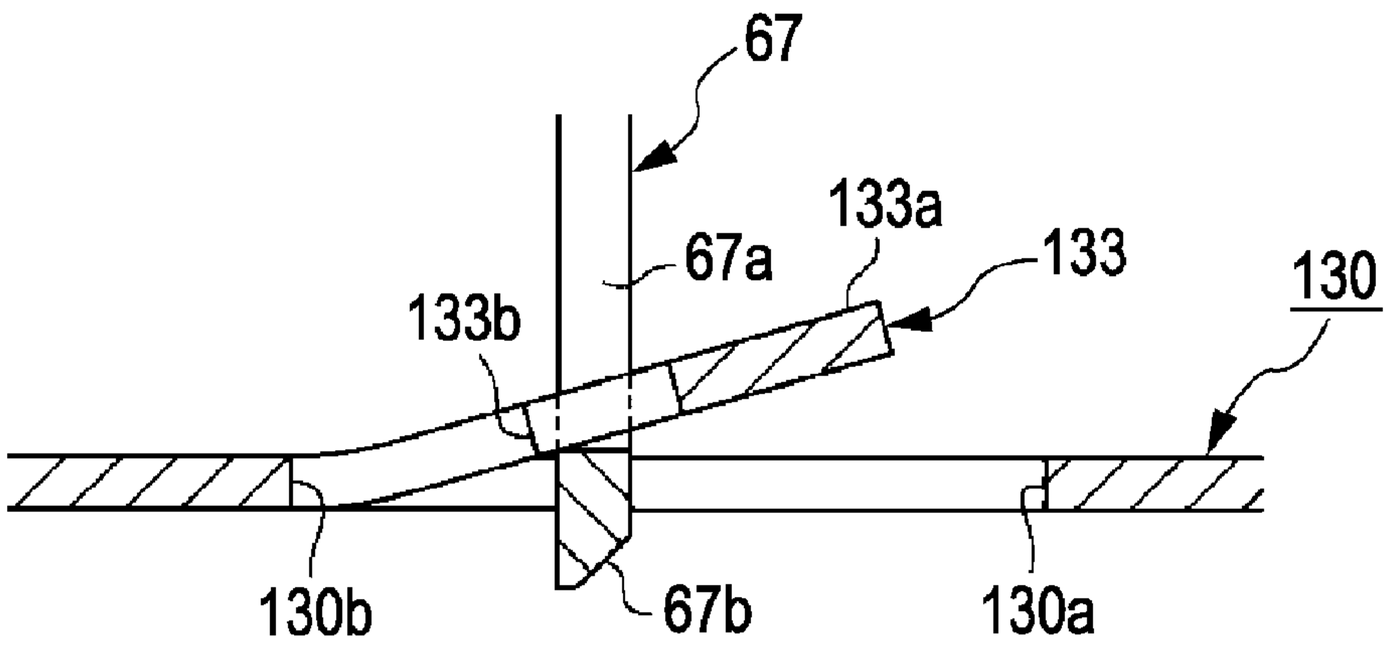
FIG. 16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LIQUID SUPPLY DEVICE AND LIQUID EJECTING APPARATUS

BACKGROUND

The entire disclosure of Japanese Patent Application No. 2008-190204, filed Jul. 23, 2008, is expressly incorporated herein by reference.

1. Technical Field

The present invention relates to a liquid supply device including a supply pump provided in a liquid supply passage, a first unidirectional valve provided in the upstream side of the supply pump, and a second unidirectional valve provided on the downstream side of the supply pump, and a liquid ejecting apparatus.

2. Related Art

In the past, an ink jet printer as a liquid ejecting apparatus printed a text, an image, or the like by ejecting ink droplets as a liquid onto a target (a sheet, etc.) from a printing head. An ink cartridge (a liquid storing member) as an ink supply source supplying ink to the printing head is mounted on such a kind of printer. As an ink supplying method of supplying ink from the ink cartridge to the printing head, there is known a method of using a water head difference based on a difference between an ink surface of the ink cartridge and the height of nozzles of the printing head or a method of supplying ink by use of a pump.

In the ink supply device (a liquid supply device) using the pump, there is known a pressurizing supply method (for example, JP-A-2002-192751 (FIG. 2, etc.)) of supplying ink by sending air pressurized by a pressurizing pump to an ink cartridge and pressurizing an ink pack accommodated in the ink cartridge or a method (JP-A-2006-272661 (FIGS. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, etc.)) of supplying ink by driving a pump provided in an ink passage and ejecting the ink sucked from an ink cartridge located on the upstream side of the ink passage toward the downstream side of the ink passage.

An ink supply device disclosed in JP-A-2062-272661 includes a pulsation type pump such as a diaphragm type pump and a pair of unidirectional valves (check valves) provided in the upstream side (an input side) and the downstream side (an output side) of the pump, respectively. The unidirectional valve (a first unidirectional valve) on the upstream side is opened by the depressurization of the ink upon the sucking drive of the pump, and maintains a valve-closed state when the pressure of the ink is increased upon the ejecting drive of the pump. On the other hand, the unidirectional valve (a second unidirectional valve) on the downstream side maintains a valve-closed state upon the sucking drive of the pump and is opened when the pressure of the ink is increased upon the ejecting drive of the pump.

In the ink supply device disclosed in JP-A-2062-272661, the pumps and the first and second unidirectional valves are formed by interposing a flexible member (a diaphragm forming member) between upper and lower cases. In this configuration, a part of the flexible member functions as a diaphragm of the pump and another part of the flexible member functions as a valve body of the unidirectional valve.

Since the portion around the pump and the valves in the flexible member function as a sealing portion, the upper and lower cases have to be joined in a compressed state to the flexible member. In the past, a method of joining the upper and lower cases was performed by fastening fastening members such as screws or bolts.

However, when the tightening force is too strong due to the non-uniformity of the tightening force of screws, the flexible member is excessively pressed and deformed. In this case,

even when the sealing portion of the portion around the pump and the valves in the flexible member is excessively pressed and deformed, a sealing function is not damaged.

However, in some cases, a part of rubber or the like excessively pressed and deformed is pushed toward the pump chamber or the inside of the valve chamber and thus the diaphragm or the valve body becomes loose. For example, when the valve body becomes loose, the time taken to open or close the unidirectional valve may be different from the designed time, thereby causing non-uniformity in the opening or closing time. The non-uniformity in the opening or closing time results in a delay of the valve closing time or the valve closeness of the first unidirectional valve (a sucking valve) on the upstream side and the second unidirectional valve (an ejecting valve) on the downstream side not completely closing, for example. In this case, when a delay of the valve closing time of the ejecting valve occurs upon starting the sucking drive or the valve does not completely close, the ink on the downstream area is depressurized and thus a necessary ink pressurizing value may not be guaranteed or the delay of the valve closing time of the sucking valve may occur upon starting the ejecting drive. Alternatively, when the delay of the valve closing time of the sucking valve occurs upon starting the ejecting drive or the valve does not completely close, the ink which has to be ejected may flow backward to the ink cartridge. In particular, when the valve closeness of the sucking valve is incomplete, a problem occurs in that the ink pressurized in the liquid supply device flows backward and thus leaks from the ink supply needle when the ink cartridge is detached to exchange the ink cartridge. Moreover, when the upper and lower cases are joined by the use of the fastening members such as screws, the work required for fastening the fastening members such as plural screws becomes very troublesome.

SUMMARY

An advantage of some aspects of the invention is that it provides a liquid supply device including a supply pump and unidirectional valves provided on the upstream side and downstream side of the supply pump, being formed by finishing an assembling work for assembling first and second members with a flexible member interposed therebetween in a relatively simple manner, and preventing the flexible member from being excessively pressed and deformed, and a liquid ejecting apparatus.

According to an aspect of the invention, there is provided a liquid supply device including: a supply pump which is provided in a liquid supply passage; a first unidirectional valve which is provided on an upstream side of the supply pump; a second unidirectional valve which is provided on a downstream side of the supply pump; a first member; a second member; and a flexible member. The supply pump and the first and second unidirectional valves are formed such that the flexible member is interposed between the first and second members and held by locking a locking unit in the state where the flexible member is interposed between the first and second members.

According to this aspect of the invention, the flexible member is held in a pressurized and inserted between the first and second members by the locking of the locking unit. For example, the liquid supply device can be simply assembled, compared to a configuration in which the liquid supply device is assembled by fastening fastening members such as screws or bolts. In the case of the configuration in which the flexible member is pressurized by and inserted between the first and second members by use of the fastening members, the flexible

member may be excessively pressed and deformed when the flexible member is excessively strongly tightened with the non-uniformity in the tightening force of the fastening members. When the flexible chamber is excessively pressed and deformed, opening or closing time of the unidirectional valve, for example, may be different from designed time. That is, various problems occur. However, the flexible member is pressurized by and inserted between the first and second members by the locking of the locking unit, the gap between the first and second members is determined so as to be nearly uniform at the locking positions of the locking unit. Moreover, there is no problem that the gap between the first and second members excessively narrowed due to the excessive tightening force, which is a problem caused when the fastening members are used. As a consequence, since the flexible member is not excessively pressed and deformed, it is possible to avoid the problem caused when the flexible member is excessively pressed and deformed. For example, when the flexible member is excessively pressed and deformed in the periphery of the valves in a case in which the valves of the unidirectional valve are formed by a part of the flexible member, the pressed and deformed portion enters the valve chamber and thus causes the valves to become loose. Thus, this may cause the non-uniformity in the opening or closing time of the unidirectional valve or the incompleteness of the valve closing. However, according to this aspect of the invention capable of preventing the flexible member from being pressed and deformed, this non-uniformity in the opening or closing time does not occur. Moreover, the unidirectional valve can be surely closed when the unidirectional valve has to be closed.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, the locking unit may hold a plurality of members including the first and second members by locking and include a locking member which is provided in one outer member of the plurality of members and a lockable member which is provided in another outer member thereof disposed opposite to the one outer member and engages with the locking member.

According to the aspect of the invention, the first and second members pressurize and interpose the flexible member by engaging the locking member provided in one of the plurality of members including the first and second members with the lockable member provided in another member. That is, since the locking unit is provided as a part of the plurality of members forming the liquid supply device, the number of components is small. Moreover, since the locking member engages with the lockable member upon assembling the members, the assembling work is also simplified.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, a metal plate which is one of the plurality of members may be disposed on the surface of at least one of the first and second members opposite to the flexible member, and the locking member may lock the lockable member formed on the metal plate.

According to the aspect of the invention, even when the first and second members are made of a plastic material, the metal plate as the member of the plurality of members may be disposed on the surface of at least one of the first and second members opposite to the flexible member. By engaging the locking member with the lockable member formed in the metal plate, the first and second members pressurize and interpose the flexible member. Accordingly, even when the first and second members are pressed stronger in the locking positions than in the other positions and thus the distribution of the force occurs, the first and second members are not deformed in the rippling shape, for example, and the flatness is ensured by the rigidity of the metal plate. As a consequence, the sealing property can be ensured between the first and second members and the flexible member.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, the lockable member may have a plate spring which is elastically deformable and the locking member engaging with the above locking member is formed in the plate spring.

According to the aspect of the invention, since the elasticity of the plate spring serves as a cushion in the locking state of the locking unit, the engagement of the locking member with the lockable member is rarely released. For example, it is possible to prevent the engagement of the locking member with the lockable member from being released because the flexible member receives the strong compression reacting force.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, the locking unit may include first locking members which lock at a plurality of positions in the circumference of a main body formed by interposing the flexible member between the first and second members and second locking members which lock at locking positions located more inside than the locking positions of the first locking members in the main body.

According to the aspect of the invention, since the first locking members lock at the plurality of positions in the circumference of the main body and the second locking members lock at the locking positions in more inside than the locking positions, the first and second members are not detached by the compression reacting force received from the flexible member and thus the whole surface of the flexible member can be surely pressurized. Accordingly, it is possible to further ensure the sealing property of the supply pump and the unidirectional valve.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, the second locking member may have a plate spring.

According to the aspect of the invention, the second locking members which lock at the locking positions inside the main body each have the plate spring. Therefore, even when the flexible member is relatively strongly pressurized in the sealing portions in more inside than the circumference of the main body, the spring elasticity of the plate spring serves as a cushion. Therefore, it is possible to prevent the flexible member from being excessively pressed and deformed, while ensuring the sealing property in the sealing portions. In addition, the second locking members can surely pressurize the whole surface of the flexible member even in the inside of the main body without the detachment of the second member from the first member by the compression reacting force received from the flexible member. Accordingly, it is possible to further ensure the sealing property of the supply pump and the unidirectional valves.

The liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention may further include a plurality of liquid supply units which each include the supply pump and the first and second unidirectional valves. Plural pairs of the supply pumps and the first and second unidirectional valves individually forming the plurality of liquid supply units may be disposed on the substantially same plane. At least one of the first and second members may be provided with concave sections for each forming a part of each chamber of the supply pump and each unidirectional valve. The locking positions of the second locking members may be located in gap areas where the concave sections are not disposed.

According to the aspect of the invention, the second locking members may lock the gap areas as the locking positions

where the concave sections formed by the plural pairs of the supply pumps and the first and second unidirectional valves are not disposed. Accordingly, since the flexible member can be surely inserted between the first and second members by a necessary pressurizing force at the positions in the circumference of the supply pumps and the unidirectional valves, it is possible to further ensure the sealing property of the plural pairs of supply pumps and the unidirectional valves.

In the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention, at least one of the first and second members may have a groove on a surface opposite to the flexible member. A part of the liquid supply passage may be formed on a surface of at least one of the first and second members opposite to the supply pumps by a spatial area surrounded by the groove and a blocking member by fixing the blocking member on the surface provided with the groove in a sealed state. The locking positions of the locking unit may be located in gap areas where a part of the liquid supply passage is not formed.

According to the aspect of the invention, since a part of the liquid supply passage is formed by the spatial area surrounded by the groove and the blocking member by fixing the blocking member onto the surface of at least one of the first and second members opposite to the surface of the flexible member (the supply pumps) in the sealed state, it is possible to make the liquid supply device compact. In addition, since the locking position is set in the gap area of the part of the liquid supply passage, the part of the liquid supply passage can engage with the member provided on the surface opposite to the surface of the supply pumps.

According to another aspect of the invention, there is provided the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention; and a liquid ejecting unit which ejects a liquid supplied from the liquid supply device.

According to this aspect of the invention, since the liquid ejecting device includes the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention to supply the liquid to the liquid ejecting unit, it is possible to obtain the same advantages as those of the liquid supply device according to the aspect of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein like numbers reference like elements.

FIG. **1** is a schematic sectional view illustrating an ink jet printer according to an embodiment.

FIG. **2**A is a schematic sectional view illustrating an ink supply device upon suction drive and FIG. **2**B is a schematic sectional view illustrating the ink supply device upon ejection drive.

FIG. **3** is a perspective view illustrating an ink supply system mounted with ink cartridges.

FIG. **4** is a perspective view illustrating the ink supply system.

FIG. **5** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the ink supply system when viewed from the upper side.

FIG. **6** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the ink supply system when viewed from the lower side.

FIG. **7** is an exploded perspective view illustrating a cover, a diaphragm forming member, and a passage forming plate.

FIG. **8** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the bottom surfaces of the cover and the diaphragm forming member.

FIG. **9** is a plan view illustrating the passage forming plate.

FIG. **10** is a bottom view illustrating the passage forming plate.

FIG. **11** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the passage forming plate and a film.

FIG. **12** is a partial bottom view for explaining an ink passage of the passage forming plate.

FIG. **13** is a partial bottom view for explaining an air passage of the passage forming plate.

FIG. **14** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the cover and a protective plate.

FIG. **15** is a schematic plan view illustrating a lockable member.

FIG. **16** is a schematic sectional view illustrating an engagement state of a locking hook and a lockable member.

DESCRIPTION OF EXEMPLARY EMBODIMENTS

Hereinafter, an ink jet printer (hereinafter, referred to as "a printer") which is an example of a liquid ejecting apparatus according to an embodiment of the invention will be described with reference to FIGS. **1** to **16**.

As shown in FIG. **1**, a printer **11** according to this embodiment includes a printing head unit **12** as a liquid ejecting unit which ejects ink (liquid) onto a target (for example, a print medium such as a sheet) (not shown) and an ink supply device **14** (a liquid supply unit) which supplies the ink stored in an ink cartridge **13** as a liquid storing member (liquid supply source) to the printing head unit **12**. When the upstream end of the ink supply device is connected to the ink cartridge **13** and the downstream end of the ink supply device is connected to the printing head unit **12**, a part of an ink passage **15** supplying the ink from an upstream side, which is the ink cartridge **13**, to a downstream side, which is the printing head unit **12**, is formed in the ink supply device **14**.

The printer **11** according to this embodiment is an ink jet type serial printer or line printer and a so-called off-carriage type printer in which the ink cartridge **13** is mounted on a printer main body. As described in FIG. **1**, the printing head unit **12** connected to the ink supply device **14** through an ink supply tube **15***e* includes a head unit body **56** and a printing head **57**. In the serial printer, for example, the head unit body **56** is formed by a carriage which reciprocates in a main scanning direction (right and left directions in FIG. **1**), while being guided by a guiding mechanism by the power of an electric motor (carriage motor) (all of which are not shown). On the other hand, in the line printer, the head unit body **56** is fixed so as to extend in a width direction perpendicular to a sheet transporting direction, and the printing head **57** is configured such that the nozzles for each color are arranged in the whole of the maximum sheet width at a predetermined nozzle pitch. Of course, in the serial printer, the ink supply device **14** may be used in a so-called on-carriage type printer in which an ink cartridge is mounted on a carriage.

The printer **11** according to this embodiment is provided with plural the ink supply devices **14** to correspond to the number (kinds) of ink colors to be used for the printer **11**. In this case, since the ink supply devices have the same configuration, one ink supply device **14** supplying one kind of ink, the printing head unit **12**, and one ink cartridge **13** are shown in FIG. **1**. Hereinafter, a case in which tone ink supply device **14** shown in FIG. **1** supplies the ink from the ink cartridge **13** to the printing head unit **12** will be described as an example. In the ink supply device **14** shown in FIG. **1**, the cross-section of passages or valves is schematically shown to explain a principle of an ink supply mechanism. A preferable shape including the layout of the passages or the valves is described below with reference to separate drawings.

As shown in FIG. **1**, in the printing head **57**, plural nozzles **16** (in this embodiment, six nozzles) corresponding to the number of ink supply devices **14** are opened on a nozzle forming surface **12***a* which faces a platen (not shown). The ink supplied from each of the ink supply devices **14** to an ink passage **12***d* formed in the printing head unit **12** through the ink passage **15** is supplied to the nozzles **16** via a valve unit **17** and a defoaming unit **58** formed in the ink passage **12***d*. That is, a pressure chamber **17***a* temporarily storing the ink flowing from the ink passage **15** is formed in the valve unit **17** to communicate with the nozzles **16**. Upon ejecting the ink from the nozzles **16**, an amount of ink corresponding to an amount of ink consumed upon ejecting the ink flows from the ink passage **15** to the pressure chamber **17***a* appropriately in accordance with an opening or closing operation of a passage valve **17***d*. The configuration of the valve unit **17** and the defoaming unit **58** is described. The six nozzles **16** form nozzle rows such that the plural nozzles are disposed at a uniform nozzle pitch in a direction perpendicular to the surface of FIG. **1**. A direction of the nozzle row (the direction perpendicular to the surface of FIG. **1**) is equal to the sheet transporting direction in the serial printer and a sheet width direction in the line printer.

The printer **11** is provided with a maintenance unit **18** which performs a cleaning operation on the printing head **57** so as to solve clogging or the like of the nozzles **16** of the printing head **57**. The maintenance unit **18** includes a cap **19** which comes in contact with the nozzle forming surface **12***a* of the printing head **57** to surround the nozzles **16**, a sucking pump **20** which is driven upon sucking the ink from the cap **19**, and a waste liquid tank **21** to which the ink sucked from the cap **19** with the drive of the sucking pump **20** is discharged as waste ink. In addition, upon performing the cleaning operation, the thickened ink or the ink mixed with bubbles is discharged from the printing head **57** to the waste liquid tank **21** by driving the sucking pump **20** in the state where the cap **19** is moved from the state shown in FIG. **1** and comes in contact with the nozzle forming surface **12***a* of the printing head **57** and by generating a negative pressure in the inner space of the cap **19**. In addition, the maintenance unit **18** is disposed at a location corresponding to a home position in which the printing head unit **12** is located in non-printing in the serial printer and disposed directly below the printing head **57** in the line printer.

On the other hand, the ink cartridge **13** includes a substantial box-like case **22** serving as an ink chamber **22***a* storing ink therein. A pipe unit **23** communicating with the inside of the ink chamber **22***a* is formed downward on the lower wall of the case **22**. An ink supply port **24** through which the ink can lead out is formed on the front end of the pipe unit **23**. When the ink cartridge **13** is connected to the ink supply device **14**, a supply needle **25** protruding from the ink supply device **14** to form the upstream end of the ink passage **15** is inserted into the ink supply port **24**, an air communication hole **26** allowing the inside of the ink chamber **22***a* storing the ink to communicate to the air is formed through the upper wall of the case **22** so that the air pressure is exerted to the liquid surface of the ink stored in the ink chamber **22***a*.

Next, the configuration of the ink supply device **14** will be described in detail.

As shown in FIG. **1**, the ink supply device **14** includes a first passage forming member **27** made of a resin material and serving as a base body, a second passage forming member **28** made of a resin material and laminated on the first passage forming member **27** to be assembled, and a flexible member **29** formed of a rubber plate or the like and interposed between both the passage forming members **27** and **28** upon the assembly. A film **120** is adhered onto the surface (rear surface) on the first passage forming member **27** opposite to the flexible member **29**. Moreover, a protective plate **130** and a receiving plate **140** are laminated on the lower surface of the film **120**. Here, concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32** having a circular shape in a plan view are formed at plural positions (in this embodiment, three positions) on the upper surface of the first passage forming member **27**. That is, the concave sections **30** to **32** are formed parallel in order of the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32** from the right side to the left side in FIG. **1**.

On the other hand, concave sections **33**, **34**, and **35** having a circular shape in a plan view and vertically facing the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32** formed on the surface of the first passage forming member **27** are formed at plural positions (in this embodiment, three positions) on the lower surface of the second passage forming member **28** laminated on the first passage forming member **27**. That is, the concave sections **33** to **35** are formed parallel in order of the concave sections **33**, **34**, and **35** from the right side to the left side in FIG. **1**. An air communication hole **35***a* communicating to the air is on the bottom of the concave section **35** formed at the most left side in the second passage forming member **28** in FIG. **1**.

The flexible member **29** is interposed between the first passage forming member **27** and the second passage forming member **28** such that plural locations (three locations in this embodiment) of the flexible member **29** are vertically separated between the concave sections **30** to **32** of the first passage forming member **27** and the concave sections **33** to **35** of the second passage forming member **28**. As a consequence, a portion of the flexible member **29** interposed between the concave section **30** of the first passage forming member **27** and the concave section **33** of the second passage forming member **28** functions as a sucking valve body (valve body) **36** which can elastically displace between the concave sections **30** and **33**.

Likewise, a portion of the flexible member **29** interposed between the concave section **31** of the first passage forming member **27** and the concave section **34** of the second passage forming member **28** functions as a diaphragm **37** which can elastically displace between the concave sections **31** and **34**. Likewise, a portion of the flexible member **29** interposed between the concave section **32** of the first passage forming member **27** and the concave section **35** of the second passage forming member **28** functions as an ejecting valve body (valve body) **38** which can elastically displace between the concave sections **32** and **35**.

As shown in FIG. **1**, a first passage **15***a* permitting the ink supply needle **25** protruding from the upper surface of the second passage forming member **28** to communicate with the concave section **30** of the first passage forming member **27** is formed in the first passage forming member **27** and the second passage forming member **28** so as to form a part of the ink passage **15** of the ink supply device **14**. Likewise, a second passage **15***b* permitting the concave section **33** of the second passage forming member **28** to communicate with the concave section **31** of the first passage forming member **27** is formed in the first passage forming member **27**, the second passage forming member **28**, and the flexible member **29** so as to form a part of the ink passage **15** of the ink supply device **14**. Likewise, a third passage **15***c* permitting the concave sections **31** and **32** of the first passage forming member **27** to communicate with each other is formed in the first passage forming member **27** so as to form a part of the ink passage **15** of the ink supply device **14**.

Likewise, a fourth passage **15***d* permitting the concave section **32** of the first passage forming member **27** to com-

municate with the upper surface of the second passage forming member **28** is formed in the first passage forming member **27**, the second passage forming member **28**, and the flexible member **29** so as to form a part of the ink passage **15** of the ink supply device **14**. An ink display port **64** which is a passage opening end of the fourth passage **15***d* opened to the upper surface of the flexible member **29** is connected to one end (upstream end) of the ink supply tube **15***e*, which forms a part of the ink passage **15**, through a pipe connection port **59** attached to the end of the ink supply device **14**. In addition, the other end (downstream end) of the ink supply tube **15***e* is connected to the valve unit **17** on the side of the printing head unit **12**. In this embodiment, the first passage **15***a* to the fourth passage **15***d* form a liquid supply passage.

As shown in FIG. **1**, the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* are in a passage passing through the rear surface of the first passage forming member **27**. Therefore, through-holes **90***a* and **30***b* forming the first passage **15***a* and a groove permitting the through-holes **90***a* and **30***b* to communicate with each other, through-holes **90***b* and **31***a* forming the second passage **15***b* and a groove permitting the through-holes **90***b* and **31***a* to communicate with each other, through-holes **31***b* and **32***b* forming the third passage **15***c* and a groove permitting the through-holes **31***b* and **32***b* to each other, and through-holes **32***c* and **91***a* forming the fourth passage **15***d* and a groove permitting the through-holes **32***c* and **91***a* to communicate with each other are formed in the first passage forming member **27**. In addition, parts of the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* are surrounded by a film **120** welded on the rear surface of the passage forming member **27** and the respective grooves, respectively.

As shown in FIG. **1**, a portion which serves as the sucking valve body **36** of the flexible member **29** of the ink supply device **14** is provided with a through-hole **36***a* in the middle thereof and urged toward the inner bottom surface of the lower-side concave section **30** by an urging force of a coil spring **40** (an urging member) disposed in the upper-side concave section **33**. In this embodiment, the concave sections **30** and **33**, the sucking valve body **36**, and the coil spring **40** constitute a sucking valve **41** (a sucking check valve) as a first unidirectional valve provided in the ink passage **15** so as to open and close the ink passage **15**. The sucking valve **41** includes a valve chamber **41***a* communicating with an opening (an ink sucking port) on the downstream end of the first passage **15***a* and a valve chamber **41***b* communicating with an opening (an ink discharging port) on the upstream end of the second passage **15***b*. The valve chamber **41***a* is formed as a spatial area with a ring shape surrounded by the concave section **30** and the sucking valve body **36** in a valve closed state where the middle of the sucking valve body **36** comes in contact with a valve seat **30***a* in the middle of the bottom surface of the concave section **30**. With such a configuration, during the openness and closeness of the sucking valve **41**, the ink pressure of the valve chambers **41***a* and **41***b* is applied to the sucking valve body **36** with an area sufficiently broader than the opening area of the passages **15***a* and **15***b*, and the sucking valve **41** can be opened and closed with good sensitivity even by a relatively small differential pressure between the valve chambers **41***a* and **41***b*. That is, the sucking valve **41** can be opened and closed with good sensitivity, compared to a case of using the sucking valve **41** having a structure in which the coil spring **40** urges the sucking valve body **36** in a valve closing direction.

Likewise, a portion which becomes a diaphragm **37** of the flexible member **29** of the ink supply device **14** is urged toward the inner bottom surface of the lower-side concave section **31** by the urging force of a coil spring **42** (an urging member) disposed in the upper-side concave section **34**. In this embodiment, the concave sections **31** and **34**, the diaphragm **37**, and the coil spring **42** constitute a pulsation type pump **43**. A volume variable spatial area surrounded by the diaphragm **37** and the lower-side concave section **31** functions as a pump chamber **43***a* in the pump **43**.

Likewise, a portion which becomes the ejecting valve body **38** of the flexible member **29** of the ink supply device **14** is urged toward the inner bottom surface of the lower-side concave section **32** by the urging force of a coil spring **44** (an urging member) disposed in the upper-side concave section **35**. In this embodiment, the concave sections **32** and **35**, the ejecting valve body **38**, and the coil spring **44** constitute an ejecting valve **45** (an ejecting check valve) as a second unidirectional valve provided in the ink passage **15** on the more downstream side than the pump **43** so as to open and close the ink passage **15**. The ejecting valve **45** includes a valve chamber **45***a* (an ink chamber) communicating with an opening (an ink inflow port) on the downstream end of the third passage **15***c* and a valve chamber **45***b* (an air chamber) opened to the air through an air communication hole **35***a*. The valve chamber **45***a* is formed as a spatial area with a ring shape surrounded by the concave section **32** and the ejecting valve body **38** in a valve closed state where the middle of the ejecting valve body **38** comes in contact with a valve seat **32***a* in the middle of the bottom surface of the concave section **32**. With such a configuration, during the openness and closeness of the ejecting valve **45**, the ink pressure of the valve chamber **45***a* is applied to the ejecting valve body **38** with an area sufficiently broader than the opening area of the third passage **15***c*, and the ejecting valve **45** can be opened and closed with good sensitivity even by a relatively small variation in pressure between the valve chamber **45***a*. That is, the ejecting valve **45** can be opened and closed with good sensitivity in comparison to using the ejecting valve **45** having a structure in which the coil spring **44** urges the ejecting valve body **38** in the valve closing direction.

As shown in FIG. **1**, a negative pressure generating device **47** constituted by the sucking pump or the like and an air opening mechanism **48** are connected to the concave section **34** of the second passage forming member **28** via an air passage **46** having a shape diverged in both directions. The negative pressure generating device **47** is driven by a driving force, which is transferred via a one-way clutch (not shown) when a driving motor **49** capable of forward and backward rotation is driven to rotate forward, to generate negative pressure. Likewise, the negative pressure generating device can also generate negative pressure in the concave section **34** of the second passage forming member **28** connected via the air passage **46**. Accordingly, the volume variable spatial area surrounded by the concave section **34** of the second passage forming member **28** and the diaphragm **37** is configured to function as a negative pressure chamber **43***b* which becomes a negative pressure state with the drive of the negative pressure generating device **47**.

On the other hand, the air opening mechanism **48** has a configuration in which an air opening valve **53** formed by adding a sealing member **52** to the side of an air opening hole **50** in a box **51** provided with the air opening hole **50** is accommodated and the air opening valve **53** typically urges the air opening hole **50** by the urging force of the coil spring **54** in the valve closing direction in which the air opening hole **50** is sealed. In addition, the air opening mechanism **48** is configured such that a cam mechanism **55** operating on the basis of the driving force transferred via the one-way clutch (not shown) operates when the driving motor **49** is driven to rotate backward and the air opening valve **53** is displaced

against the urging force of the coil spring **54** in a valve opening direction by the operation of the cam mechanism **55**. That is, the air opening mechanism **48** opens the inside of the negative pressure chamber **43***b* to the air to release a negative pressure state by allowing the air opening valve **53** to perform a valve opening operation when the negative pressure chamber **43***b* connected via the air passage **46** becomes the negative pressure state.

One negative pressure generating device **47**, one air opening mechanism **48**, and one driving motor **49** driving the negative pressure generating device and the air opening mechanism are provided and shared by the plural ink supply devices **14**. That is, an air passage pipe **46***a* forming the air passage **46** which connects between the negative pressure generating device **47**, the air opening mechanism **48**, and each ink supply device **14** is connected to an air passage **46***b* formed in each ink supply device **14**. The air passage **46***b* is diverged in the midway thereof and the front end of the diverged passage is connected to the negative pressure chamber **43***b* of the pump **43** of each ink supply device **14**. With such a configuration, since the ink supply devices **14** can be driven just by providing one negative pressure generating device **47**, one air opening mechanism **48**, and one driving motor **49** in the plural ink supply devices **14**, it is possible to reduce the size of the printer **11**. The air passage **46***b* connected to the pressure chamber **43***b* of each pump **43** is opened to the upper surface of the flexible member **29** via the rear surface of the first passage forming member **27** and forms a negative pressure lead-out port **65**. The negative pressure lead-out port **65** is connected to one end (the upstream end) of an air supply tube **46***c* through the pipe connection port **59**. In addition, the other end (the downstream end) of the air supply tube **46***c* is connected to the printing head unit **12** and negative pressure can be introduced to the defoaming unit **58**.

Here, the configurations and functions of the valve unit **17** and the defoaming unit **58** provided within the printing head unit **12** will be described. As shown in FIG. **1**, an air chamber **12***c* communicating to the air via the air communication hole **12***b* is provided within the printing head unit **12**. The valve unit **17** includes the pressure chamber **17***a* which temporarily stores the ink flowing to the ink passage **12***d* formed in the printing head unit **12**, a partition wall **17***b* partitioning the pressure chamber **17***a* and the air chamber **12***c*, and a passage valve **17***d* which is urged in the valve closing direction by a spring **17***c* to come in contact with the partition wall **17***b*. The partition wall **17***b* is formed of a film (or a sheet) made of a flexible material (for example, synthetic resin or rubber), and a metal piece (for example, a metal piece having a pectinate shape, for example) (not shown) having a portion displaceable together with, for example, a film is disposed at the contact position of the passage valve **17***d*. In addition, an ink storing chamber **12***e* which temporarily stores ink is formed in the ink passage **12***d* formed from the pressure chamber **17***a* to the nozzles **16**.

When the ink from the nozzles **16** is ejected and consumed, the actual pressure of the pressure chamber **17***a* is depressurized by a decrease in the ink and the partition wall **17***b* is bent and deformed toward the pressure chamber **17***a* on the basis of a differential pressure between the depressurized pressure chamber **17***a* and the air chamber **12***c*, so that the passage valve **17***d* is moved to a valve opened position against the urging force of the spring **17***c* and the ink flows to the pressure chamber **17***a*. When the ink flows into the pressure chamber **17***a* and the actual pressure of the pressure chamber is increased, the passage valve **17***d* is again moved to a valve closed position since the actual pressure exceeds the urging force of the spring **17***c*. When the passage valve **17***d* of the valve unit **17** opens and closes the passage in accordance with the consumption of the ink, the ink is configured to appropriately flow from the ink supply tube **15***e* to the printing head unit **12**.

The defoaming unit **58** includes a depressurizing chamber **58***a* communicating with the air supply tube **46***c* via the negative pressure passage **12***f* formed in the printing head unit **12**, a partition wall **58***b* partitioning the depressurizing chamber **58***a* and the air chamber **12***c*, a passage valve **58***d* urged by the spring **58***c* to come in contact with the partition wall **58***b*, and a negative pressure chamber **58***e* communicating with the depressurizing chamber **58***a* upon valve openness of the passage valve **58***d*. The two partition walls **17***b* and **58***b* are formed of a common film (or a sheet), and a metal piece (not shown) having a piece displaceable together with the contact position of the passage valve **58***d* is disposed in the partition wall **58***b*.

The negative pressure chamber **58***e* and the ink storing chamber **12***e* are partitioned through a partition wall **58***f* formed of a synthetic resin material having a gas permeable property. When a negative pressure is introduced to the depressurizing chamber **58***a* via the air supply tube **46***c* and the negative pressure passage **12***f* upon the sucking drive of the pump **43**, the partition wall **58***b* is bent and deformed toward the depressurizing chamber **58***a* on the basis of the differential pressure between the depressurizing chamber **58***a* and the air chamber **12***c* and the negative pressure of the depressurizing chamber **58***a* is introduced to the negative pressure chamber **58***e* by moving the passage valve **58***d* to the valve opened position against the urging force of the spring **58***c*. On the other hand, the depressurizing chamber **58***a* is opened to the air through the air supply tube **46***c* and the negative pressure passage **12***f* upon the ejecting drive of the pump **43**. At this time, however, since the passage valve **58***d* is maintained at the valve closed position by the urging force of the spring **58***c*, the negative pressure chamber **58***e* maintains the negative pressure state. That is, after the sucking drive of the pump **43** is performed at least one time after the activation of the printer **11**, the negative pressure chamber **58***e* maintains a negative pressure state to some extent or more, and bubbles or dissolved air in the ink stored in the ink storing chamber **12***e* permeate through the partition wall **58***f* to be collected to the side of the negative pressure chamber **58***e*. In this way, the defoaming unit **58** defoams the ink.

Next, the operation of the printer **11** having the above-described configuration will be described particularly focusing the operation of the ink supply device **14**. FIG. **2**A is a diagram illustrating the cross-section of the ink supply device upon the sucking drive and FIG. **2**B is a diagram illustrating the cross-section of the ink supply device upon the ejecting drive.

First, it is assumed that the state shown in FIG. **1** shows the state immediately after an old ink cartridge is replaced by a new ink cartridge, and the sucking valve body **36** of the sucking valve **41**, the diaphragm **37** of the pump **43**, and the ejecting valve body **38** of the ejecting valve **45** are pressed down and attached onto the inner bottom surface of the lower-side concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32** by the urging forces of the coil springs **40**, **42**, and **44**, respectively. In addition, it is assumed that the air opening mechanism **48** is in the valve closed state where the air opening valve **53** seals the air opening hole **50**.

When the ink supply device **14** supplies the ink from the ink cartridge **13** to the printing head unit **12** in the state shown in FIG. **1**, the driving motor **49** is first driven to rotate forward to drive the pump **43**. Then, the negative pressure generating device **47** generates the negative pressure and the negative

pressure chamber **43***b* of the ink supply device **14** connected to the negative pressure generating device **47** via the air passage **46** becomes the negative pressure state. Accordingly, the diaphragm **37** of the pump **43** is elastically deformed (displaced) toward the negative pressure chamber **43***b* against the urging force of the coil spring **42** to decrease the volume of the negative pressure chamber **43***b* (see FIG. **2**A). Then, the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* partitioned with the negative pressure chamber **43***b* through the diaphragm **37** is conversely increased with the decrease in the volume of the negative pressure chamber **43***b*.

That is, the pump **43** displaces the diaphragm **37** in a direction increasing the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* to perform the sucking drive. Specifically, the diaphragm **37** is displaced from a bottom dead point shown in FIG. **1** to a top dead point shown in FIG. **2**A. Accordingly, the pump chamber **43***a* becomes a negative pressure state, the negative pressure is applied to the upper-side valve chamber **41***b* of the sucking valve **41** through the second passage **15***b*, and the sucking valve body **36** is elastically deformed (displace) toward the upper side (that is, in the valve opening direction) against the urging force of the coil spring **40** on the basis of the pressure difference with the ink pressure of the lower-side valve chamber **41***a*. As a consequence, the first passage **15***a* and the second passage **15***b* becomes a communication state one another through the through-hole **36***a* of the sucking valve body **36**, and the ink is sucked from the ink cartridge **13** to the pump chamber **43***a* via the first passage **15***a*, the valve chamber **41***a*, the through-hole **36***a*, the valve chamber **41***b*, and the second passage **15***b*.

On the other hand, upon the sucking drive of the pump **43**, the negative pressure of the pump chamber **43***a* is also applied to the more downstream side of the ink passage **15** than the pump chamber **43***a*, that is, the third passage **15***c* through the third passage **15***c*. However, the lower-side valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45** communicating with the downstream side of the third passage **15***c* is configured so as not to become the valve opened state, as long as the ejecting valve body **38** is urged in the valve closing direction by the coil spring **44** and an ink ejection pressure of a predetermined positive pressure (for example, a pressure of 13 kPa or more) is not applied from the upstream side of the third passage **15***c* to the ejecting valve body **38** by the ejecting drive of the pump **43** in the valve closed state. Accordingly, in this case, the ejecting valve body **38** of the ejecting valve **45** maintains the valve closed state, since the negative pressure is applied.

Next, the driving motor **49** is driven to rotate backward in the state shown in FIG. **2**A. Then, the air opening valve **53** performs the valve opening operation against the urging force of the coil spring **54** by the operation of the cam mechanism **55** of the air opening mechanism **48** and opens the negative pressure chamber **43***b*, which has been in the negative pressure state, to the air. Accordingly, the diaphragm **37** of the pump **43** is elastically deformed (displaced) toward the lower side (that is, the inner bottom surface of the pump chamber **43***a*) and the volume of the negative pressure chamber **43***b* is increased by the urging force of the coil spring **42** (see FIG. **2**B). On the contrary, the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* of the pump **43** partitioned with the negative pressure chamber **43***b* through the diaphragm **37** decreases with the increase in the volume of the negative pressure chamber **43***b*.

That is, the pump **43** displaces the diaphragm **37** in a direction decreasing the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* to perform the ejecting drive. Specifically, as shown in FIG. **2**B, the diaphragm **37** is displaced from the top dead point to the bottom dead point, and the ink which has been sucked in the pump chamber **43***a* is pressurized at a predetermined pressure (for example, about a pressure of 30 kPa). Accordingly, the ink in the pump chamber **43***a* is ejected, the ejection pressure is applied to the upper-side valve chamber **41***b* of the sucking valve **41** via the second passage **15***b* on the more upstream side than the pump chamber **43***a*, and the ejection pressure elastically deforms (displaces) the sucking valve body **36** toward the lower side (that is, the valve closing direction) in cooperation with the urging force of the coil spring **40**. As a consequence, the first passage **15***a* and the second passage **15***b* become a non-communication state by a valve closing operation of the sucking valve body **36**, the suction of the ink from the ink cartridge **13** to the pump chamber **43***a* via the sucking valve **41** stops, and the ink ejected from the pump chamber **43***a* with the ejecting drive of the pump **43** is regulated so as not to flow backward to the ink cartridge **13** via the sucking valve **41**.

On the other hand, upon the ejecting drive of the pump **43**, the pressure (for example, about a pressure of 30 kPa) of the ink ejected from the pump chamber **43***a* is also applied to the downstream side of the ink passage **15** via the third passage **15***c*. Accordingly, the ejecting pressure of the pump **43** permits the ejecting valve body **38** in the valve closed state to perform the valve opening operation, so that the third passage **15***c* and the fourth passage **15***d* communicate with each other through the lower-side valve chamber **45***a* in the ejecting valve **45**. As a consequence, the pressurized ink from the pump chamber **43***a* is supplied to the valve unit **17** via the third passage **15***c*, the valve chamber **45***a*, the fourth passage **15***d*, and the ink supply tube **15***e*. In addition, the urging force of the coil spring **44** in the ejecting valve **45** is set to about 13 kPa, for example, so that the ejecting valve body **38** is elastically deformed toward the upper side by the ejection pressure of the ink, when the ink flows to the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45** upon the ejecting drive of the pump **43**.

Thereafter, the ejection pressure of the ink pressurized by the diaphragm **37** and ejected from the pump chamber **43***a* remains in balance in the respective passage areas (which include the pump chamber **43***a* and the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45**) on the downstream side including the valve chamber **41***b* of the sucking valve **41** in the ink passage **15**. Thereafter, when the ink is ejected from the printing head **57** to a target (not shown), an amount of the ink corresponding to the amount of ink consumed upon the ejection of the ink is supplied from the ink passage **15** to the printing head unit **12** upon the valve openness of the valve unit **17**. Accordingly, as the ink is consumed in the downstream side (the printing head unit **12**), the amount of ink corresponding to the amount of ink consumed is supplied in the pressurized state to the printing head unit **12** (on the downstream side) on the basis of the pressurizing force of the diaphragm **37** urged in a direction decreasing the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* by the urging force of the coil spring **42**.

As a consequence, the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* and the volume of the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45** gradually decrease. Finally, the diaphragm **37** is displaced up to the vicinity of the bottom dead point and the ejecting valve body **38** is displaced up to the vicinity of the valve closed position at which the fourth passage **15***d* is closed. In this embodiment, the diaphragm **37** is pressurized at this time point and the ejection pressure of the ink ejected from the pump chamber **43***a* becomes about 13 kPa.

Then, the driving motor **49** is again driven to rotate forward, the air opening valve **53** is displaced in the air opening mechanism **48** to the valve closed position at which the air opening hole **50** is closed. In addition, the negative pressure generating device **47** generates the negative pressure, so that

the negative pressure chamber **43***b* becomes the negative pressure state and the diaphragm **37** is elastically deformed (displaced) toward the negative pressure chamber **43***b* against the urging force of the coil spring **42**. That is, the pump **43** again starts the sucking drive. As a consequence, since the diaphragm **37** is displaced to the top dead point to increase the volume of the pump chamber **43***a* and the pump chamber **43***a* becomes the negative pressure state, the sucking valve body **36** is elastically deformed (displaced) in the valve opening direction. Accordingly, the first passage **15***a* and the second passage **15***b* becomes the communication state through the through-hole **36***a* of the sucking valve body **36**, and the ink is sucked from the ink cartridge **13** to the pump chamber **43***a*. Thereafter, the ejecting drive of the pump **43** is performed and the pressurized ink is supplied from the pump chamber **43***a* to the printing head unit **12** via the ink passage area on the downstream side.

Next, an example of an ink supply system in which the plural ink supply devices **14** having the above-described configuration are made into one unit will be described with reference to FIGS. **3** to **20**.

FIG. **3** is a perspective view illustrating the ink supply system mounted with plural ink cartridges. FIG. **4** is a perspective view illustrating the ink supply system when the ink cartridges are not mounted. Hereinafter, in the following description, a direction parallel to an arrangement direction of the ink supply needles **25** is denoted by an X direction, a direction perpendicular to the arrangement direction of the ink supply needles is denoted by a Y direction, and an upper direction which is perpendicular to the XY plane and a protruding direction of the ink supply needles **25** is denoted by a Z direction.

An ink supply system **61** which is a liquid supply device shown in FIGS. **3** and **4** is disposed at a predetermined position within the printer **11** and functions as a cartridge holder on which the ink cartridges **13** are mounted. The ink supply system **61** has a lamination structure with a substantially rectangular plate. The ink supply needles **25** (see FIG. **4**) arranged in plural rows (in this embodiment, six rows) are disposed in one row in the x direction on the upper surface of the ink supply system so as to protrude perpendicularly (in the Z direction) from the upper surface thereof. The plural (in this embodiment, six) ink cartridges **13** are mounted on the upper side of the ink supply system **61** so as to be nearly adjacent to each other in one row in the X direction by inserting the ink supply needles **25** into the ink supply ports **24** (see FIG. **1**) of the pipe unit **23**, respectively.

The ink supply system **61** according to this embodiment has a structure in which the six ink supply devices **14** capable of individually supplying six colors such as cyan, magenta, yellow, light cyan, light yellow, and black respectively stored in the six ink cartridges **13** are made into one unit. That is, the ink supply system **61** is capable of using the lamination structure in which plural constituent members having a plate shape are laminated by disposing six pumps **43** (supply pumps), six sucking valves **41** (first unidirectional valves), and six ejecting valves **45** (second unidirectional valves) respectively forming the six ink supply devices **14** on the same plane. In addition, the ink supply system **61** made into one component (one unit) is realized by configuring at least one of the plural constituent members to a single (common) passage forming member and laminating the other constituent members (where the single passage forming member is not necessarily required and the constituent members may be formed in each of the ink supply device). In this embodiment, however, as described below, all the plural constituent members laminated to form the ink supply system **61** are formed as the single forming members that are common to the six ink supply devices **14**. The number of the ink supply devices **14** made into one unit as the ink supply system **61** is not limited to six. For example, plural ink supply devices such as two to ten ink supply devices or ten or more ink supply devices may be used. It is not necessary to match with the number of colors (the number of ink cartridges) of the printer **11**. For example, two ink supply systems each formed by making three ink supply devices **14** into one unit may be mounted in the printer **11**. That is, the plural ink supply systems may be mounted in one printer **11**.

As shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**, the ink supply system **61** includes a main body **62** which has a rectangular plate shape and includes plural (for example, six) pump **43**, sucking valves **41**, and ejecting valves **45** corresponding to the number of colors and a pipe connection section **63** which has a plate shape horizontally extending from one end of the main body **62**.

As shown in FIG. **4**, the main body **62** has the six ink supply needles **25** which protrude from the upper surface of the main body vertically (in the Z direction) so as to be arranged in one row in the X direction therein, the six pumps **43** which are arranged in two rows in the X direction so that each three pumps are arranged in one row, the six sucking valves **41** which are arranged in one row in the X direction, and the six ejecting valves **45** which are arranged in one row in the X direction.

As shown in FIGS. **3** and **4**, six ink discharging ports **64** and one negative pressure lead-out port **65** are opened on the upper surface of the pipe connection section **63**. The six ink discharging ports **64** each serve as a discharging port which pressurizes and supplies the ink sucked from each ink cartridge **13** by each pump **43** to the outside with a predetermined ejection pressure. The one negative pressure lead-out port **65** serves as a lead-out port which leads out the negative pressure introduced into the ink supply system **61** from the negative pressure generating device **47** (see FIG. **1**) to permit the pulsation type pump **43** to perform the sucking drive for another usage (in this embodiment, the defoaming unit **58**).

The pipe connection tool **59** (see FIG. **1**), which is fixed to one end of a flexible pipe plate in which the six ink supply tubes **15***e* and the one air supply tube **46***c* (see FIG. **1**) connected to the printing head unit **12** are bundled onto a flexible plate, is connected to the pipe connection section **63**. The ink discharged from each of the ink discharging ports **64** is pressurized and supplied to each of the valve units **17** formed in the printing head unit **12** via each of the ink supply tubes **15***e*. On the other hand, the negative pressure led out from the negative pressure lead-out port **65** upon the sucking drive of the pump **43** is supplied to the defoaming unit **58** formed in the printing head unit **12** via the air supply tube **46***c* (see FIG. **1**). In the ink supply system **61** according to this embodiment, a connection tube **106** (see FIG. **16**) connected to the air passage pipe **46***a* (see FIG. **1**) protrudes from the rear surface. In addition, the air passage **46***b* formed within the ink supply system **61** passes through the inside of a path formed from the connection tube **106** to the negative pressure lead-out port **65** via the negative pressure chamber **43***b* of each pump **43**.

The ink supply system **61** has the lamination structure in which the six members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, **130**, and **140** are laminated. The upper five members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** forming the ink supply system **61** are fixed by being fastened at plural positions (in this embodiment, nineteen positions) in a pressurized state by a predetermined fastening force in the lamination direction from the upper side. On the lower side of the lamination structure in which the five members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** are locked and fixed in the laminated state, the

receiving plate **140** is fixed to the lowermost layer of the lamination structure by fastening two screws **68** in the lamination direction from the lower side.

Hereinafter, the detailed configuration of the ink supply system **61** will be described. FIG. **5** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the ink supply system **61** when viewed from the upper side. FIG. **6** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the ink supply system **61** when viewed from the lower side. In FIGS. **5** and **6**, the protective plate **130** is not shown. As shown in FIGS. **5** and **6**, the ink supply system **61** includes the cover **70** which has a rectangular plate shape and corresponds to the second passage forming member **28**, the diaphragm forming member **80** which corresponds to the flexible member **29**, the passage forming plate **90** which corresponds to the first passage forming member **27**, the film **120**, the protective plate **130**, and the receiving plate **140** in this order from the upper side. The film **120** is welded in advance on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** before the assembly. Upon the assembly, the coil springs **40**, **42**, and **44** respectively corresponding to the upper sides of the sucking valve body **36**, the diaphragm **37**, and the ejecting valve body **38** incorporated into the diaphragm forming member **80** are set. Then, the upper five members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** having the rectangular plate shape are fixed in a vertical direction (a lamination direction) of FIGS. **5** and **6** in the pressurized state by a predetermined force by inserting plural locking hooks **66** (in this embodiment, nineteen locking hooks) vertically extending from plural positions of the rear surface of the cover **70** into the laminated members **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** and locking plural lockable members **132** and **133** formed on the protective plate **130** disposed in the lowermost layer. In this way, it is possible to assemble the lamination structure in which the cover **70**, the diaphragm forming member **80**, the passage forming plate **90**, the film **120**, and the protective plate **130** are fixed in the laminated state with the coil springs **40**, **42**, and **44** accommodated between the cover **70** and the diaphragm forming member **80** in a compressed state. The ink supply system **61** shown in FIG. **4** is formed by disposing the receiving plate **140** (see FIGS. **3** and **4**) on the bottom surface of the lamination structure in which the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** are fixed and fastening the two screws **68** from the lower side to fix the receiving plate **140** on the lowermost layer.

Here, the cover **70**, the passage forming plate **90**, and the receiving plate **140** are made of a plastic material and formed in a predetermined rectangular plate shape by metal molding (ejection molding, etc.), for example, using a synthetic resin material. The diaphragm forming member **80** is made of elastomer or rubber and formed in a predetermined rectangular plate shape by metal molding (ejection molding, etc.), for example. The film **120** is formed of a laminated film which has a surface made of a synthetic resin material which can be welded with the synthetic resin material of the passage forming plate **90** and is cut in a predetermined substantially rectangular shape. The protective plate **130** is made of a metal material and is punched in a predetermined rectangular plate shape to form the plural lockable members **132** and plural holes **134**.

The cover **70**, the diaphragm forming member **80**, and the passage forming plate **90** are constituent members which are laminated in the state where the coil springs **40**, **42**, and **44** are accommodated and in which the six pumps **43**, the six sucking valves **41**, and the six ejecting valves **45** are disposed on the same plane. The cover **70** is also used as a board provided with the ink supply needles **25**.

Plural grooves **101** to **105** (see FIGS. **15** and **16**) for forming the first passage **15***a*, the second passage **15***b*, the third passage **15***c*, the fourth passage **15***d*, and the air passage **46***b* (see FIG. **1** and FIGS. **2**A and **2**B) are formed on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**. By welding the film **120** on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**, the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* and the air passage **46***b* connecting between the ink supply needles **25**, the sucking valves **41**, the pumps **43**, and the ejecting valves **45** are formed on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**.

The reason to use the sucking valves **41**, the ejecting valves **45**, and the coil springs **40** and **44** is to ensure to what extent the check valves (the unidirectional valve) have closed. For example, when the valve closeness of the ejecting valve **45** has not closed completely and thus the ink leaks, an amount of ink flowing in the ink passage of each color becomes irregular. Moreover, when the valve closeness of the sucking valve **41** is incomplete and thus the ink leaks, the ink flowing backward comes out unnecessarily from the ink supply needle **25** in a case where the ink cartridge **13** is detached, for example. In this way, when the ink is unnecessarily consumed, a difference in the amounts of ink of respective colors consumed occurs. For this reason, the check valves of the sucking valve body **36** and the ejecting valve body **38** require a configuration for preventing the ink from leaking. In this embodiment, the urging coil springs **40** and **44** are provided in addition to the diaphragm type valve bodies **36** and **38**. Of course, when this configuration is used, it is necessary to broaden the diaphragm areas of the valve bodies **36** and **38** so as to open the valves against the urging force of the coil springs **40** and **44**, and the valves **41** and **45** are required to have the broad disposition area.

In this embodiment, the check valve structure requiring this broad disposition area is used to ensure reliability, but other structures may be realized to save a space. For example, almost all of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** are disposed within a projection range of the ink cartridges **13** before the ink cartridges are mounted on the ink supply system **61**, and the ink supply system **61** is formed in a substantially same plane size as that of the projected area.

In the ink supply system **61** according to this embodiment, the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** are disposed very precisely within a predetermined rectangular area by arranging the six pumps **43** having a relatively large diameter in two rows so as to be nearly adjacent to each other and arranging the six sucking valves **41** and the six ejecting valves **45** having a relatively small diameter, which is the substantially half of the diameter of the pump **43**, in one row so as to be nearly adjacent to each other in the adjacent area of the pumps. In addition, each of the ink supply needles **25** is disposed in the gap between the rows of the pumps **43**. With such a layout, the ink supply system **61** can be configured so as to have a small thickness and a small plane size. However, when the precise layout is used, the ink supply needle **25** and the sucking valve **41**, the sucking valve **41** and the pump **43**, and the pump **43** and the ejecting valve **45** are relatively distant from each other, respectively. Moreover, the passage lengths of the first passage **15***a*, the second passage **15***b*, the third passage **15***c*, the fourth passage **15***d*, and the air passage **46***b* may be relatively long. Accordingly, by disposing the first passage **15***a*, the second passage **15***b*, the third passage **15***c*, the fourth passage **15***d*, and the air passage **46***b* on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**, the effective layout of the lengthened passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, **15***d*, and **46***b* can be achieved without sacrificing the precise layout (that is, the reduction in the plane size) of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45**.

Next, the configuration of each member of the ink supply system **61** will be described.

FIG. **7** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the front surfaces (the upper surfaces) of the diaphragm forming member and the passage forming plate. FIG. **8** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the rear surfaces (the lower surfaces) of the cover and the diaphragm forming member. FIG. **9** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the passage forming plate and a film when viewed from the side of the rear surface.

As shown in FIG. **7**, the cover **70** includes a board **71** which has a rectangular plate shape and in which the ink supply needles **25** of the plural rows protrude from the upper surface (the front surface). In a substantially ⅔ area of the upper surface of the board **71** in the vicinity of the location where the ink supply needles **25** are arranged in row, six pump housing sections **72** swelled in a substantially conic frustum shape toward the upper side (in the Z direction) are arranged in two rows at a uniform interval in the X direction so that three pump housing sections are arranged in one row.

The six ink supply needles **25** are arranged in gap areas, which correspond to row spaces between the pump housing pumps **72** arranged in two rows, at a uniform pitch (a pitch slightly broader than the width of the ink cartridge **13** in the X direction) in the X direction. At this time, the six ink supply needles **25** are located on both sides interposing the line segments connecting the central points of the three pairs of pump housing sections **72** each paired in the Y direction in a plan view of FIG. **6**.

In the substantially remaining ⅓ area of the upper surface of the board **71**, six sucking valve housing sections **73** swelled in the substantially conic frustum shape having a diameter smaller than that of the pump housing section **72** and six ejecting valve housing sections **74** swelled in a substantially conic frustum shape having almost the same diameter as that of the sucking valve housing section are respectively arranged in one row so as to be nearly adjacent in the X direction. The six sucking valve housing sections **73** are arranged in the vicinity of the pump housing sections **72** arranged in two rows and the six ejecting valve housing sections **74** are arranged in the vicinity of the row of the sucking valve housing sections **73**. The six sucking valve housing sections **73** and the six ejecting valve housing sections **74** are located so as to be also nearly adjacent in the Y direction. On the front surface of the cover **70**, an extension section **71***a* having a predetermined height is formed on nearly the whole circumference so as to surround the circumference. In addition, screw insertion holes **76***a* are formed at fastening positions of the screws **68** (see FIGS. **3** and **4**) in the board **71**.

As shown in FIG. **8**, on the rear surface of the cover **70**, the six concave sections **34** having a concave shape and forming the negative chamber **43***b* are formed at the positions corresponding to the pump housing sections **72**. In addition, on the rear surface of the cover **70**, six concave sections **33** having a concave shape are formed at the positions corresponding to the sucking valve housing sections **73** and six concave sections **35** having a concave shape are formed at the positions corresponding to the ejecting valve housing sections **74**. The concave sections **33**, **34**, and **35** are formed in the substantially conic frustum shape on the inner circumferential surface having a concave shape. The concave sections **33** and **35** have a smaller diameter which is the substantial half of the diameter of that of the concave sections **34**.

Columnar convex portions **34***a* inserted outwardly into the upper end of the coil spring **42** (see FIGS. **1**, **5**, and **7**) protrude from the bottoms of the concave sections **34** having a cylindrical shape. The inner diameter of the bottom of the concave sections **33** and **35** having a substantially conic frustum shape is slightly larger than the outer diameter of the coil springs **40** and **44**, and the upper end of the coil springs **40** and **44** are positioned at the substantial middle of the concave sections **33** and **35** by bringing the coil springs **40** and **44** into contact with the bottom of the concave sections **33** and **35**.

On the rear surface of the cover **70**, six through-holes **25***a* communicating with the ink supply needles **25** are formed at a uniform pitch in the X direction at the positions corresponding to the positions corresponding to the ink supply needles **25**. Grooves **77** permitting the two adjacent concave sections **34** in the Y direction to communicate with each other are formed on the rear surface of the cover **70**. The grooves **77** form a part of the air passage **46***b* for introducing the negative pressure into the two concave sections **34** (that is, the negative pressure chambers **43***b*) located at the both sides in the longitudinal direction. In addition, a groove **33***a* extending by a predetermined length from each of the concave sections **33** in the outward diameter direction is formed on the rear surface of the cover **70**. The groove **33***a* forms a part of the second passage **15***b* for supplying the ink in the sucking valve **41** to the pump chamber **43***a*.

A sealing portion **78***a* which has a substantial 8-shape and extends in a strip shape having a nearly uniform width along the circumference of the two concave sections **34** adjacent to each other in the Y direction and the circumference of the groove **77** permitting both the concave sections **34** to communicate with each other is formed on the rear surface of the cover **70**. A sealing portion **78***b* which has a substantially ring shape and extends in a strip shape with a nearly uniform width along the circumference of the concave section **33** and the groove **33***a* is formed. Moreover, a sealing portion **78***c* which has a substantially ring shape and extends in a strip shape with a nearly uniform width along the circumference of the concave section **35** is formed. A sealing portion **78***d* having a ring shape surrounding a long elliptical area is formed in the most left concave section **34** located in the first row in FIG. **8** so as to be conjunctive to the sealing portion **78***a*. A sealing portion **78***e* having a ring shape is also formed in the circumference of each through-hole **25***a*. The sealing portions **78***a* to **78***e* are formed in a convex shape with a height of the range from about several 10 μm to about several 100 μm from the bottom surface (the rear surface) of the cover **70**.

A pair of positioning pins **79** protrude from the rear surface of the cover **70** at both the sides interposing the concave sections **34** located in the first row in the X direction. These pins **79** are used to position the cover **70** to the passage forming plate **90**. A pair of boss sections **76** each having a screw insertion hole **76***a* for inserting the screw **68** protrude from the rear surface of the cover **70**.

Next, the configuration of the diaphragm forming member **80** will be described.

The diaphragm forming member **80** shown in FIGS. **7** and **8** is made of rubber having rubber elasticity or elastomer. The diaphragm forming member **80** includes a sheet main body **81** which has a substantially rectangular shape having almost the same size as that of the cover **70** and an extension section **82** which extends from one end (the left lower end in FIG. **7**) of the sheet main body **81** and forms a sealing portion of the pipe connection section **63**. The sheet main body **81** is provided with the six diaphragms **37** which each have a circular disk shape and are disposed at the positions corresponding to the concave sections **34** of the cover **70**, the six sucking valve bodies **36** which are disposed at the positions corresponding to the concave sections **33**, and the six ejecting valve bodies **38** which are disposed at the positions corresponding to the concave sections **35**. The diaphragm **37** has a large diameter to correspond to the concave section **34**. The sucking valve body **36** and the ejecting valve body **38** have a small diameter

which is the about half of that of the diaphragm **37** to correspond to the concave sections **33** and **35**, respectively. As shown in FIG. **7**, the diaphragm **37** has a flat columnar convex portion **37***a* on the upper middle surface thereof and the end (the lower end) of the coil spring **42** is inserted outwardly into the convex portion **37***a* to position the coil spring.

As shown in FIGS. **7** to **8**, in the gap areas which are the row spaces between the diaphragms **37** arranged in two rows in the diaphragm forming member **80**, six through-holes **81***a* are formed at the positions corresponding to the through-holes **25***a* of the ink supply needles **25** of the cover **70**. Three through-holes **81***b* are formed at the positions between the through-holes **81***a* in the X direction, that is, the positions corresponding to the lines connecting the central points of the three pairs of diaphragms **37** arranged in the Y direction, respectively. The three through-holes **81***b* forms a part of the air passage **46***b* for introducing the negative pressure into the negative pressure chamber **43***b* together with the grooves **77** of the cover **70**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **8**, six through-holes **81***c* are formed in the vicinities of the sucking valve bodies **36** in the diaphragm forming member **80**, respectively. The through-holes **81***c* form a part of the second passage **15***b* permitting the sucking valve **41** to communicate with the pump **43** and individually communicate with the front end of the grooves **33***a* (see FIG. **8**) formed on the rear surface of the cover **70**.

As shown in FIG. **7**, the upper surface of the sucking valve body **36** protrudes in the cylindrical shape having a through-hole **36***a* (see FIG. **1**), and the lower end of the coil spring **40** urging the sucking valve body **36** toward the lower side is inserted inwardly into the cylinder. In addition, the upper surface of the ejecting valve body **38** protrudes in a cylindrical shape with the bottom and the lower end of the coil spring **44** urging the ejecting valve body **38** toward the lower side is inserted inwardly into the cylinder.

As shown in FIG. **7**, the front surface (the upper surface) of the diaphragm forming member **80** is provided with sealing portions **83***a* having a substantial 8-shape and sealing the circumferences of two diaphragms **37** and the through-hole **81***b* in the Y direction, sealing portions **84***a* having a substantial ring shape and sealing the circumferences of the sucking valve body **36** and the through-hole **81***c*, and sealing portions **85***a* having a ring shape and sealing the circumference of the ejecting valve body **38**. As shown in FIG. **8**, the rear surface (the lower surface) of the diaphragm forming member **80** is also provided with sealing portions **83***b* having a substantial 8-shape and sealing the circumferences of two diaphragms **37** and the through-hole **81***b* in the Y direction, sealing portions **84***b* having a substantial ring shape and sealing the circumferences of the sucking valve body **36** and the through-hole **81***c*, and sealing portions **85***b* having a ring shape and sealing the circumference of the ejecting valve body **38**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** to **8**, on the upper surface and the lower surface of the diaphragm forming member **80**, sealing portions **86***a* and **86***b* having a ring shape are formed in the circumference of each through-hole **81***a*, respectively. On the upper surface and the lower surface of the diaphragm forming member **80**, sealing portions **87***a* and **87***b* are formed at the positions corresponding to the sealing portion **78***d* of the cover **70**. In addition, the sealing portions **83***a* to **87***a* and the sealing portions **83***b* to **87***b* are formed in a convex shape with the height of about several 10 μm to about several 100 μm, for example, from the bottom surface, and formed so as to be thinner than the corresponding sealing portions of the cover **70** and located in correspondence with the nearly middle in the width direction of the corresponding sealing portions of the cover **70**. The sealing portions **83***a* to **87***a* on the front surface of the diaphragm forming member **80** and the sealing portions **83***b* to **87***b* on the rear surface thereof are formed so as to be plane-symmetry, respectively.

Six through-holes **82***a* serving as the ink discharging port **64** and one through-hole **82***b* serving as the negative pressure lead-out port **65** are formed in the extension section **82** of the diaphragm forming member **80**. In addition, plural insertion holes **89***a* into which the locking hooks **66** and **67** are inserted and a pair of concave portions **89***b* into which the screws **68** are inserted are provided in the diaphragm forming member **80**. Plural pin holes **89***c* are formed in the vicinity of the diaphragms **37** arranged in the first row.

Next, the configuration of the passage forming plate **90** will be described with reference to FIG. **7** and FIGS. **9** to **11**. FIG. **9** is a plan view illustrating the upper surface of the passage forming plate. FIG. **10** is a bottom view illustrating the rear surface (the bottom surface) of the passage forming plate. FIG. **11** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the passage forming plate and a film. In FIG. **10**, reference numerals of the passage corresponding to the groove are given in a parenthesis.

The passage forming plate **90** shown in FIG. **7** and FIGS. **9** to **11** includes an extension section **91** at the position corresponding to the extension section **82** of the diaphragm forming member **80** and has the substantially same rectangular plate shape as that of the diaphragm forming member **80** in a plan view. The passage forming plate **90** according to this embodiment is made of a plastic material such as polypropylene (PP). The reason to use the polypropylene is because the polypropylene has a relatively high gas barrier performance (that is, a low gas permeable property) among plastic materials and is a material (a thermoplastic material) which easily welds the film **120**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, on the upper surface of the passage forming plate **90**, the six concave sections **31** are formed in the concave shape at the positions corresponding to the diaphragms **37**, the six concave sections **30** are formed in the concave shape at the positions corresponding to the sucking valve bodies **36**, and the six concave sections **32** are formed in the concave shape at the positions corresponding to the ejecting valve bodies **38**. In the passage forming plate **90**, the through-holes **90***a* are formed at the positions corresponding to the ink supply needles **25**. The six through-holes **90***a* are arranged in one row at a uniform pitch in the X direction in the gap areas which are the row spaces between the concave sections **31** arranged in two rows. Through-holes **90***a* form a part of the first passage **15***a* and the ink supplied from the ink supply needles **25** are sent to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** via the through-holes **90***a*.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, the through-hole **30***b* formed at the eccentric position located outside the valve seat **30***a* protruding at the middle of the concave section is formed in each of the concave sections **30**. The through-hole **30***b* forms a part of the first passage **15***a* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an inflow passage of the ink flowing from the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** to the inside (the valve chamber **41***a*) of the sucking valve **41**. The through-hole **90***b* is formed in the vicinity of each concave section **30**. The through-hole **90***b* forms a part of the second passage **15***b* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an outflow passage of the ink from the valve chamber **41***b* of the sucking valve **41** to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, one pair of through-holes **31***a* and **31***b* are formed in the concave section **31** forming the pump chamber **43***a*. The through-hole **31***a* forms a part of the second passage **15***b* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an outflow passage of the ink sucked into the pump chamber **43***a*.

On the other hand, the through-hole **31***b* forms a part of the third passage **15***c* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an inflow passage of the ink ejected from the pump chamber **43***a*. In each concave section **32**, the through-hole **32***b* is formed at the position located in the outer circumference of the valve seat **32***a* located at the middle of the bottom surface of the concave section **32** and having a circular plate shape and the through-hole **32***c* is formed at the middle of the valve seat **32***a*. The through-hole **32***b* forms a part of the third passage **15***c* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an inflow passage through which the ink ejected from the pump **43** flows into the ejecting valve **45**. On the other hand, the through-hole **32***c* forms a part of the fourth passage **15***d* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and serves as an outflow passage of the ink flowing from the ejecting valve **45**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, the six through-holes **91***a* (ink discharging holes) and one negative pressure lead-out hole **91***b* are formed in the extension section **91**. The six through-holes **91***a* form a part of the fourth passage **15***d* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) and the one negative pressure lead-out hole **91***b* forms a part of the air passage **46***b* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**).

In the right upper end of the passage forming plate **90** shown in FIG. **14**, a pair of through-holes **90***e* and **90***f* and a groove **90***g* permitting both the through-holes **90***e* and **90***f* to communicate with each other are formed in the vicinity of the right concave section **31** located in the first row. The through-holes **90***e* and **90***f* and the groove **90***g* form a part of the air passage **46***b* (see FIG. **1**) for introducing the negative pressure into the negative pressure chamber **43***b*.

In the gap areas which are the row spaces between the concave sections **31** arranged in the two rows, three through-holes **92** are individually formed at the positions corresponding to the nearly central points of the line segments connecting the central points of the three concave sections **31** each paired in the Y direction. The through-holes **92** form a part of the air passage **46***b* and serves as a passage for introducing the negative pressure. The introduced negative pressure reaches the grooves **77** on the rear surface of the cover **70** via the through-holes **81***b* of the diaphragm forming member **80** to be introduced to the two negative pressure chambers **43***b* located on both the side in Y direction via the grooves **77**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, in the peripherals of the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32**, sealing portions **93***a*, **93***b*, **93***c*, **93***d*, and **93***e* extending in a strip shape so as to be nearly plane-symmetric with the sealing portions **78***a*, **78***b*, **78***c*, **78***d*, and **78***e* of the cover **70** protrude so as to have a width of about 0.5 mm to about 2 mm and a height of about several 10 μm to about several 100 μm, for example. The sealing portions **93***a*, **93***b*, **93***c*, **93***d*, and **93***e* are located to correspond to the sealing portions **83***b*, **84***b*, **85***b*, **86***b*, and **87***b* formed on the rear surface of the diaphragm forming member **80**. Upon the assembly of the ink supply system **61**, the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member **80** having rubber elasticity are put and come in pressing contact between the sealing portions of the cover **70** and the sealing portions of the passage forming plate **90** to ensure the sealing property of the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32**.

As shown in FIGS. **7** and **9**, boss sections **94** each having an insertion hole **94***a* protrude from the passage forming plate **90** at the positions corresponding to the locking hooks **66** and **67**. Columnar pins **96** having an outer diameter slightly smaller than the inner diameter of the pin hole **89***c* protrude from the passage forming plate **90** at the positions corresponding to the pin holes **89***c* of the diaphragm forming member **80**. Positioning holes **97** having the inner diameter slightly larger than the outer diameter of the pin **79** are provided in the passage forming plate **90** at the positions corresponding to the pins **79** of the cover **70**.

The plural (in this embodiment, nineteen) boss sections **94** are inserted into the screw insertion holes **89***a* of the diaphragm forming member **80** and the pins **96** are inserted into the pin holes **89***c*, so that the diaphragm forming member **80** is positioned to the passage forming plate **90** in a state where the sucking valve bodies **36**, the diaphragms **37**, and the ejecting valve bodies **38** face the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32**, respectively. In addition, the pins **79** of the cover **70** are inserted into the positioning holes **97**, so that the cover **70** is positioned to the passage forming plate **90** and the diaphragm forming member **80** is positioned to the passage forming plate **90**.

Here, the protrusion height of the boss sections **94** of the passage forming plate **90** and the boss sections **76** (see FIG. **8**) of the cover **70** is configured such that a gap between the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** is determined as a predetermined value by bringing the upper end surface of the boss sections **94** into contact with the rear surface of the cover **70** and by bringing the upper end surface of the boss sections **76** into contact with the upper surface of the passage forming plate **90**. That is, the gap between the cover **70** and the passage forming plate **90** becomes narrower than a valve for engaging the locking hooks **66** and **67** with the lockable members **132** and **133** (see FIG. **6**), the boss sections **76** and **94** come in contact with the surfaces of the members on the opposite side, and the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member **80** are compressed at the contact positions. The sealing portions **83***a*, **83***b*, **84***a*, **84***b*, **85***a*, **85***b*, **86***a*, **86***b*, **87***a*, and **87***b* of the diaphragm forming member **80** are inserted between the sealing portions of the cover **70** and the passage forming plate **90** by an appropriate pressurizing force suitable for the sealing to come in pressing contact with each other in the state where the locking hooks **66** and **67** are engaged with the lockable members **132** and **133** (see FIG. **6**).

Next, the configuration of the rear surface (the bottom surface) of the passage forming plate **90** will be described. As shown in FIG. **10**, on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**, a partition wall **100** forming side walls of the passages **15***a* to **15***d* and **46***b* (see FIGS. **1** and **2**) extends along a predetermined passage path. The partition wall **100** is closed in the shape of a blind passage in all passages **15***a* to **15***d* and **46***b*. Plural grooves (hereinafter, referred to as "a first groove **101** to a fifth groove **105**) formed such that a gap (which is a gap of adjacent portions extending substantially parallel) is a groove width are formed in the partition wall **100**. In this embodiment, as shown in FIG. **11**, by welding the film **120** onto the passage forming surface (the bottom surface) of the passage forming plate **90**, the spatial areas surrounded by the first groove **101** to the fifth groove **105** and the film **120** serve as passages **111** to **115** passing through the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**. At this time, the four kinds of first groove **101** to fourth groove **104** serve as the first ink passage **111** to the fourth ink passage **114**, respectively, and are provided in each of the six ink supply devices **14**. The other one kind of fifth groove **105** serves as the air passage **115** and one groove is provided in a passage passing through the vicinity of the negative pressure chamber **43***b* of each of the six ink supply devices **14**.

As shown in FIGS. **10** and **11**, in one corner (the left upper corner in FIG. **10**) of the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**, one negative pressure introducing tube **106** protrudes vertically from the rear surface. One end of the air passage pipe **46***a* (see FIG. **1**) connected to the negative pressure generating device **47** is connected to the negative

pressure introducing tube **106**. The negative pressure introducing tube **106** serves as a port for introducing negative pressure to the ink supply system **61**. The air passage groove **105** communicating with the tube **106** extends in a passage formed up to the negative pressure lead-out hole **91***b* via three through-holes **92**.

A pair of pins **107** positioning the protective plate **130** to the passage forming plate **90** protrude at the upper right and left positions of the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** in FIG. **10**. An extension section **108** having the substantially same height of that of the partition wall **100** is formed in nearly the whole circumference of the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**.

As shown in FIG. **11**, the film **120** is formed in a substantially rectangular shape having almost the same circumference as that of the passage forming plate **90**, and welded to the end surfaces (the upper end surface in FIG. **16**) of the partition wall **100** and the extension section **108**. The film **120** is formed of a lamination film formed by interposing a metal plate between resin layers. A gas barrier property is improved due to the metal plate (for example, an aluminum plate) and the welding to the passage forming plate **90** is ensured due to the resin layer (for example, thermoplastic resin such as polypropylene) of the surface. Moreover, the film **120** includes an extension section **121** corresponding to the extension section **91** of the passage forming plate **90** and concave portions **120***a* and **120***b* for avoiding the tube **106** and the pins **107** of the passage forming plate **90**, respectively.

FIG. **12** is a partial bottom view illustrating a portion associated with an ink passage on the rear surface of the passage forming plate. FIG. **13** is a partial bottom view mainly illustrating the air passage on the rear surface of the passage forming plate. In FIGS. **12** and **13**, the portions (the boss sections, etc.) other than the passages (the grooves) are not illustrated. In FIG. **12**, the portions corresponding to the two ink supply devices **14** are illustrated. Here, similarly to FIG. **10**, in FIGS. **12** and **13**, reference numerals are given to the passages corresponding to the grooves. In the following description, the groove **101** is considered to be the passage formed after the film welding for explanation.

As shown in FIGS. **10** and **12**, the first ink passage groove **101** to the fourth ink passage groove **104** are surrounded by spaces with the film **120** welded onto the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** to serve as the first ink passage **111**, the second ink passage **112**, the third ink passage **113**, and the fourth ink passage **114**, respectively.

As for six groups of the ink passages **111** to **114** forming each of the six ink supply devices **14**, since the location relation of the ink supply needles **25**, the pump **43**, the sucking valves **41**, and the ejecting valves **45** is slightly different from each other in the ink supply device **14** in which the pumps **43** are located in the first row (the lower row in FIG. **10**) and the ink supply device **14** in which the pumps **43** are located in the second row (the lower row in FIG. **10**), the passage path and the like are slightly different in each of the ink supply devices **14**. However, the groups of the ink passages **111** to **114** basically have the same configuration, except for the slightly different paths. Accordingly, in FIG. **12**, the ink passages will be described focusing the two ink supply devices **14** located opposite the pipe connection section **63** (see FIGS. **3** and **4**).

In FIG. **12**, the upper-side concave section **31** of the two concave sections **31** arranged in the upper and lower sides and the left concave sections **30** and **32** among the concave sections **30** and **32** arranged right and left correspond to one ink supply device **14**. The lower-side concave section **31** and the right concave sections **30** and **32** correspond to the other ink supply device **14**.

As shown in FIG. **12**, the first ink passage **111** (the first groove **101**) is a passage permitting the through-hole **90***a* corresponding to the ink supply needle **25** to communicate with the through-hole **30***b* of the sucking valve **41** (the concave section **30**). Accordingly, upon the sucking drive of the pump **43**, the ink flowing from the ink supply needle **25** to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** via the through-hole **90***a* flows to the through-hole **30***b* via the first ink passage **111** and then flows from the through-hole **30***b* to the sucking valve **41**.

The second ink passage **112** is a passage permitting the through hole **90***b* in the vicinity of the sucking valve **41** (the concave section **30**) to communicate with the through-hole **31***a* of the pump **43** (the concave section **31**). Accordingly, upon the sucking drive of the pump **43**, the ink flowing from the through-hole **90***b* to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** via the sucking valve **41** which has been opened by the ink pressure (the negative pressure) caused by the sucking drive flows to the through-hole **31***a* via the second ink passage **112** and then flows from the through-hole **31***a* to the pump chamber **43***a*.

The third ink passage **113** is a passage which permits the through-hole **31***b* of the pump **43** (the concave section **31**) to communicate with the through-hole **32***b* of the ejecting valve **45** (the concave section **32**). Accordingly, upon the ejecting drive of the pump **43**, the ink ejected from the pump chamber **43***a* and flowing from the through-hole **31***b* to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** flows to the through-hole **32***b* via the third ink passage **113** and then flows from the through-hole **32***b* to the ejecting valve **45**.

The fourth ink passage **114** serves as a passage which permits the through-hole **32***c* of the ejecting valve **45** (the concave section **32**) to communicate with the through-hole **91***a* of the extension section **91**. Accordingly, upon the ejecting drive of the pump **43**, the ink flowing from the through-hole **32***c* to the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** via the ejecting valve **45** which has been opened by the ink pressure pressurized by the ejecting drive flows to the through-hole **91***a* via the fourth ink passage **114** and then flows from the ink discharging port **64** of the pipe connection section **63** via the through-hole **91***a*.

Next, the air passage to which the negative pressure is introduced will be described. As shown in FIG. **13**, the negative pressure from the negative pressure introducing tube **106** is introduced to the air passage **115** on the rear surface via the groove **90***g* and the through-hole **90***f* of the passage forming plate **90**. The air passage **115** extends from the through-hole **90***f* to the negative pressure lead-out hole **91***b* sequentially through the positions corresponding to the rear surface of the pump chambers **43***a* (the concave sections **31**) of the pumps **43** arranged in the first row. Moreover, the air passage **115** includes three air passages **115***a* diverged from the positions individually corresponding to the rear surface of the pump chambers **43***a* (the concave sections **31**) to extend toward the lower side of FIG. **18**. The air passage **115** communicates with the three through-holes **92** individually corresponding to the diverged three air passages **115***a*. Accordingly, the negative pressure introduced into the air passage **115** via the tube **106** of the ink supply system **61** upon the sucking drive of the pumps **43** is led out from the through-holes **92** to the front surface of the passage forming plate **90** via the diverged air passages **115***a*. In addition, the negative pressure led out from the through-holes **92** reaches the middle portion in the length direction of the grooves **77** of the rear surface of the cover **70**

via the through-holes **81***b* of the diaphragm forming member **80** and then is introduced along the grooves **77** to the two negative pressure chambers **43***b* located on both the sides in the length direction.

FIG. **14** is an exploded perspective view illustrating the cover and the protective plate. The protective plate **130** shown in FIGS. **5**, **6**, **14** is formed of a metal plate, for example, having almost the same outer circumferential shape as that of the film **120**. The protective plate **130** includes an extension section **131** corresponding to the pipe connection section **63** and the plural lockable members **132** and **133** at the positions corresponding to the locking hooks **66** and **67**. A hole **134** into which the tube **106** is inserted is formed at the position corresponding to the tube **106** of the protective plate **130** on the side of the passage forming plate **90**.

As shown in FIGS. **8** and **14**, the cover **70** is a part of the main body **62** in the cover **70** assembled as the ink supply system **61**. The total nineteen locking hooks **66** and **67** as a locking member vertically extend on the bottom surface (the rear surface) of the cover **70**. The total twelve locking hooks **66** extend along the circumference of the rear surface of the cover **70** at a predetermined interval. That is, four locking hooks **66** are formed at the four corners of the rear surface of the cover **70** and each two locking hooks **66** are formed between the four locking hooks **66**.

As shown in FIG. **8**, the total seven locking hooks **67** are disposed in more inside than the disposed positions of the twelve locking hooks **66** on the rear surface of the cover **70** and extend at the positions of the gap areas of the concave sections **34**, **33**, and **35** forming pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45**. Specifically, among the seven locking hooks **67**, two locking hooks are formed in two gap areas surrounded by the four pumps **43** (the concave sections **34** in the cover **70**), two locking hooks are formed in two gap areas surrounded by the two pumps **43** and the two sucking valves **41** (the concave sections **33** in the cover **70**), and three locking hooks are formed in three gap areas which are the other gap areas among the five gap areas surrounded by the two sucking valves **41** and the two ejecting valves **45** (the concave sections **35** in the cover **70**). The two kinds of locking hooks **66** and **67** have the same shape except the locking hooks **66** lock at the positions of the circumference of the main body **62** and the locking hooks **67** lock at the positions located inside the main body **62** and corresponding to the gap areas of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45**. The locking hooks **66** and **67** extend in a rectangular plate shape having a predetermined thin long size and locking holes **66***a* and **67***a* having a thin long rectangular shape are formed in the locking hooks **66** and **67**, respectively. Instead of the locking holes **66***a* and **67***a*, locking concave portions may be formed.

As shown in FIG. **14**, twelve lockable members **132** are formed in the circumference of the protective plate **130** at the positions corresponding to the twelve locking hooks **66**. The lockable member **132** is a locking claw formed in a predetermined shape of a remaining portion after a metal plate as a material in a manufacturing process of the protective plate **130** is punched. Seven lockable members **133** are formed inside the protective plate **130** at the positions corresponding to the seven locking hooks **67**. In this embodiment, the locking hook **66** and the lockable member **132** constitute a first locking member and the locking hook **67** and the lockable member **133** constitute a second locking member. The first and second locking members constitute a locking unit.

FIG. **15** is a schematic plan view illustrating the lockable member **133**. As shown in FIGS. **14** and **15**, the lockable member **133** includes a plate spring **133***a*, which is formed in the shape of a remaining portion after a material plate as a material in the manufacturing process of the protective plate **130** is punched to form a hole **130***a*, and a locking nail **133***b* which protrudes from the plate spring **133***a*. The plate spring **133***a* has a substantially U-shape and two ends thereof extend from a metal board in a state where a metal board portion does not form the lockable member is connected to the metal board. The locking nail **133***b* protrudes to the inner circumference of the plate spring **133***a*. The locking nail **133***b* is formed to have a width slightly narrower than the hole width of the locking hole **67***a* of the locking hook **67**. In addition, the locking nail **133***b* can be inserted into the locking hole **67***a*.

FIG. **16** is a schematic sectional view illustrating an engagement state of the locking hook and the lockable member. As shown in FIG. **16**, the front end (the lower end) of the locking hook **67** is provided with a guiding surface **67***b* formed as an inclined surface having a thickness which is as thin as the front end. When the guiding surface **67***b* of the front end of the locking hook **67** first comes in contact with the locking nail **133***b* of the lockable member **133** and then the locking hook **67** is relatively moved toward the lower side of FIG. **16** with respect to the lockable member **133**, the locking nail **133***b* slides along the guide surface **67***b* and thus the locking hook **67** is pushed in a direction (a left direction in FIG. **16**) moving away from the locking nail **133***b*. When the locking hole **67***a* of the locking hook **67** reaches the position corresponding to the locking nail **133***b*, the locking nail **133***b* is inserted into the locking hole **67***a* and thus the locking hook **67** and the lockable member **133** engages with each other in the locked state. In addition, a guiding surface formed as an inclined surface is formed in the front end of the locking hook **66**.

The ink supply system **61** is assembled in the following manner. The members **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** are laminated after the film **120** is welded in advance on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**. Then, the cover **70** is pushed until the locking hooks **66** and **67** engage with the lockable members **132** and **133** of the protective plate **130**, while the locking hooks **66** and **67** of the cover **70** are inserted into the insertion holes **89***a* and **94***a* of the members **80** and **90** from the upper side. As a consequence, the locking hooks **66** and **67** engage with the lockable members **132** and **133** and the diaphragm forming member **80** is inserted between the cover **70** and the passage forming plate **90** in the pressurized state, so that the cover **70** and the protective plate **130** are fixed by the locking. In this way, the lamination structure of the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** can be assembled in the state where the sealing property is ensured between the members **70**, **80**, and **90**. In addition, the ink supply system **61** can be assembled by laminating the receiving plate **140** on the bottom surface of the lamination structure in the state and inserting the two screws **68** into the screw insertion holes **76***a* to fasten the receiving plate from the lower side.

At this time, by inserting the boss sections **94** and the pins **96** of the passage forming plate **90** into the insertion holes **89***a* and the pin holes **89***c* of the diaphragm forming member **80**, respectively, in the laminated state of the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** before the screw fastening, the diaphragm forming member **80** is positioned to the passage forming plate **90** in the state where the sucking valve bodies **36**, the diaphragms **37**, and the ejecting valve bodies **38** face the concave sections **30**, **31**, and **32**, respectively. In addition, by inserting the pins **79** into the positioning holes **97**, the cover **70** is positioned to the passage forming plate **90** in the state where the sucking valve bodies **36**, the diaphragms **37**, and the ejecting valve bodies **38** face the concave sections **33**, **34**, and **35**, respectively.

In the state where the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** are locked and fixed, the gap between the cover **70** and the passage forming plate **90** is determined by a length from the bottom surface of the cover **70** to the locking position (that is, the front end engaging with the lockable members **132** and **133** in the openings of the locking holes **66***a* and **67***a*) of the locking hooks **66** and **67**. Since this gap is determined by the length from the base end of the locking hooks **66** and **67** to the front end of the locking holes **66***a* and **67***a*, the non-uniformity in the gap rarely occurs in the ink supply system **61**. Accordingly, in the state where the locking hooks **66** and **67** engage with the lockable members **132** and **133**, the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member **80** is inserted between the sealing portions of the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** in the pressurized state and compressed by a pressurizing force suitable for the sealing. As a consequence, the sealing property of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** are ensured.

For example, when the fastening is carried out excessively strong due to the non-uniformity in the fastening force in the case of using the fastening member such as screws or bolts, the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member (the flexible member) is excessively pressed and deformed, the rubber of the portion excessively pressed and deformed is pushed toward the inside of the valve chamber, and some sucking valve bodies or some ejecting valve bodies become loose. For this reason, the opening or closing time of the valve for the ink pressure may become different in the valves (the unidirectional valves) of which the valve bodies become loose and the valves of which the valve bodies do not become loose. For example, the opening or closing time of the sucking valve body may become different and thus the sucking valve which has to be closed when the negative pressure chamber of the pump is opened to the air may not be completely closed. In this case, when the ink cartridge is detached, the pressurized ink may flow backward and thus the ink may leak from the ink supply needle.

In the configuration according to this embodiment, however, since the sealing portions **84***a* and **84***b* of the diaphragm forming member **80** is not excessively pressed and deformed, the non-uniformity in the opening or closing time of the sucking valve **41** for the ink pressure rarely occurs in the ink supply system **61**. In addition, when the negative pressure chamber **43***b* is opened to the air, the sucking valve **41** is completely closed. As a consequence, when a user detaches the ink cartridge **13**, the ink pressurized in the ink supply system **61** can be prevented from flowing backward and leaking from the ink supply needle **25**.

When the ejecting valve does not completely close in spite of the ink pressure for closing the valve due to the non-uniformity in the opening or closing time of the ejecting valve for the ink pressure, the non-uniformity in the amount of ink flowing between the ink passages of the ink colors may occur. In the configuration according to this embodiment, however, since the sealing portions **85***a* and **85***b* of the diaphragm forming member **80** are not excessively pressed and deformed and the ejecting valve bodies **38** do not become loose, the ejecting valves **45** are surely closed upon the sucking drive of the pumps **43**. As a consequence, the non-uniformity in the amount of ink flowing between the ink passages of the ink colors rarely occurs.

The excessive pressing and deformation of the sealing portions can be prevented. However, when an urging force in the valve closing direction of the sucking valve body **36** and the ejecting valve body **38** is weak, the ink leakage in the sucking valve **41** and the ejecting valve **45** may occur. In order to solve this problem, a check valve configuration having the coil springs **40** and **44** (the urging members) urging the sucking valve body **36** and the ejecting valve body **38** in the valve closing direction is intentionally used to ensure that the valve closes, even though the size of the sucking valve **41** and the ejecting valve **45** is increased.

Even though the size of the sucking valve **41** and the ejecting valve **45** is increased, the compact ink supply system **61** is configured by disposing the six pumps **43**, the six sucking valves **41**, and the six ejecting valves **45** on the same plane in the main body **62** of the ink supply system **61** in a relatively precise manner. In this case, the pumps **43** having the relatively large diameter are arranged in two rows, the six ink supply needles **25** are arranged in one row at the same interval in the spatial areas between the rows of the pumps, and the six sucking valves **41** and the six ejecting valves **45** are arranged in one row in the direction parallel to the rows of the pumps in the areas adjacent to the rows of the pumps.

In this layout, the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** are precisely arranged, but the positions of the ink supply needles **25**, the pumps **43**, and the valves **41** and **45** may be relatively distant from each other. Therefore, the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* may be relatively lengthened. In this embodiment, however, the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* surrounded by the grooves **101** to **104** and the film **120** are disposed on the rear surface opposite to the surface (the front surface) of the passage forming plate **90** provided with the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45**, by providing the plural grooves **101** to **104** on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** and welding the film **120** on the rear surface thereof. With such a configuration, the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d* can be assembled in one same component without sacrificing the relatively precise layout of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45**.

In a state where the six ink cartridges **13** are mounted on the ink supply needles **25** of the ink supply system **61**, respectively, in FIG. **3**, assuming that a projection range obtained by projecting an area (a minimum rectangular area containing the six ink cartridges **13** in a plan view) for disposing the six ink cartridges **13** on the upper surface of the ink supply system **61** in the lamination direction is "a cartridge projection range", the six pumps **43** are laid out relative to the positions of the six ink supply needles **25** such that all the central points of the six pumps fall within the cartridge projection range. The six sucking valves **41** arranged in one row are laid out relative to the positions of the six ink supply needles **25** such that all the central points of the sucking valves fall within the cartridge projection range. The six ejecting valves **45** arranged in one row are also laid out relative to the positions of the six ink supply needles **25** such that all the central points of the ejecting valves fall within the cartridge projection range. That is, in this embodiment, the six pumps **43**, the six sucking valves **41**, and the six ejecting valves **45** are laid out such that all the central points thereof fall within the cartridge projection range determined by the positions of the six ink supply needles **25**.

The cartridge projection range is within the upper surface of the compact main body **62** formed so as to have a relatively compact size by laying out the six ink supply needles **25**, the six pumps **43**, the six valves **41**, and the six valves **45** in a relatively precise manner. With such a configuration, a space required to dispose the ink supply system **61** (the cartridge holder) and the six ink cartridges **13** in the printer **11** can be restrained so as to be relatively small. As a consequence, it is possible to make the printer **11** compact.

The first ink passage **111** to the fourth ink passage **114** formed on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** extend so as to be spaced from and adjacent to the partition

wall **100** at the portions (the areas between the through-holes **90***a* in the vertical direction of FIG. **12** and the vicinities of the middles of the concave sections **30**) corresponding to the path of the first to fourth ink passages. For example, when the outside of the partition wall is in contact with the air (the atmosphere), the air gas-permeates the partition wall to be dissolved in the ink flowing inside the partition wall and the dissolved air may become bubbles in the ink. Alternatively, the moisture of the ink may permeate the partition wall and evaporate. In this embodiment, however, since the ink of the other ink passages flows outside the partition wall **100**, it is possible to prevent the cause that the air permeates the partition wall and is dissolved in the ink to make the bubbles or the cause that the moisture of the ink permeates the partition wall and the ink is evaporated, compared to a configuration in which the partition wall faces the air. As a consequence, the bubbles rarely occur in the ink and it is easy to prevent a failure in the ejection of ink droplets caused due to the bubbles. Moreover, it is easy to prevent a failure in the ejection of the ink droplets caused by clogging of the nozzles occurring because the ink is easily thickened due to the moisture evaporation.

Since the protective plate **130** formed of a metal plate is disposed on the lower side of the film **120**, the passage forming plate **90** made of a plastic material (PP) can be prevented from being deformed in a rippling shape due to the distribution of a force relatively strongly pushed in the locking positions in the state where the locking hooks **66** and **67** engage with the lockable members **132** and **133**. Accordingly, since the flatness of the passage forming plate **90** is guaranteed even in the locking state, it is possible to prevent the sealing performance from deteriorating due to the deformation of the rippling shape in the passage forming plate and ensure the sealing property, for example.

The ink leaking to the upper surface of the cover **70** upon mounting or detaching the ink cartridge **13** or the ink leaking from the gap between the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member **80** is accumulated in the receiving plate **140** disposed in the lowermost layer through a hole (not shown). In addition, the receiving plate **140** is provided with a drain passage at one position of the circumference and the ink is discharged to the outside along the drain passage to be collected in the waste liquid tank **21**. Accordingly, it is possible to prevent the inside of the printer **11** from being smeared due to the waste ink leaking from the ink supply system **61**.

As described in detail above, the following advantages can be obtained according to this embodiment.

(1) The cover **70** and the protective plate **130** engage with each other and are fixed by the engagement of the locking hooks **66** and **67** with the lockable members **132** and **133** with the diaphragm forming member **80** interposed between the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** in the pressurized state. Accordingly, when the cover **70** is pressed down until the engagement of the locking hooks **66** and **67** of the cover **70** with the lockable members **132** and **133** of the protective plate **130** through the insertion holes **89***a* of the diaphragm forming member **80** and the holes **94***a* of the passage forming plate **90**, the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** can be assembled in the laminated state. As a consequence, it is possible to assemble the ink supply system **61** in a relatively simple manner, compared to a configuration of assembling the members in the laminated state by fastening the fastening members such as screws or bolts.

(2) Since the gap between the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** is nearly uniformly determined uniquely by the length to the locking position of the locking hooks **66** and **67**, the non-uniformity in this gap rarely occurs in the ink supply system **61**. Accordingly, the diaphragm forming member can be prevented from being excessively pressed and deformed due to the fastening of an excessively strong force due to the non-uniformity of the fastening force, which is a problem when the configuration fastened by the fastening member is used. Therefore, the non-uniformity in the opening or closing time of the valves **41** and **45** caused because the diaphragm forming member **80** is excessively pressed and deformed rarely occurs. Moreover, the valves **41** and **45** are surely closed when the valve closeness is required. As a consequence, it is possible to prevent the ink from leaking from the ink supply needle **25** when the ink cartridge **13** is detached. Moreover, it is possible to prevent the amount of ink flowing from the ink supply system **61** from being not uniform between the ink colors. In a known configuration assembled by use of the fastening member, the ink on the downstream area is depressurized and thus a necessary ink pressurizing value may not be guaranteed when the delay of the valve closing time of the sucking valve occurs upon starting the ejecting drive or the valve closeness is incomplete. Alternatively, when the delay of the valve closing time of the sucking valve occurs upon starting the ejecting drive or the valve closeness is incomplete, the ink which has to be ejected may flow backward to the ink cartridge. However, in the ink supply system **61** according to this embodiment, it is possible to prevent this problem.

(3) The locking positions of the locking hooks **66** and **67** are set not only in the circumference of the main body **62** but also in the inside portion thereof. That is, the plural (twelve) locking hooks **66** disposed along the whole circumference of the main body **62** and the plural (seven) locking hooks **67** arranged in the gap areas between the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** inside the main body **62** are provided. With such a configuration, the sealing property can be ensured in the circumference by narrowing the gap between the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** in the circumference of the main body **62**. Moreover, the gap between the sealing portions of the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** can be maintained so as to be narrow in the inside area of the main body **62**. Accordingly, it is possible to ensure the sealing property of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** across the whole surface of the main body **62**.

In the case of the configuration in which the locking hook **67** and the lockable member **133** as the second locking member are not provided, the passage forming plate **90** or the cover **70** made of a synthetic resin material may receive a compression reacting force of the diaphragm forming member **80** to be curved and thus deformed and the cover **70** may be detached from the passage forming plate **90** at the middle of the cover **70**. In this case, the sealing property of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** is not ensured in the middle of the main body **62**. In this embodiment, however, since the locking hooks **67** engage with the lockable members **133** not only in the circumference of the main body **62** but also in the inside portion, it is possible to prevent the detachment of the middle of the cover **70** from the passage forming plate **90**. Accordingly, in the ink supply system **61** according to this embodiment, it is possible to surely ensure the sealing property of all the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** in the whole surface of the main body **62**.

(4) Since the plate spring **133***a* is formed in each of the lockable members **133** of the protective plate **130** which can engage with the locking hooks **67** locking at the positions located inside the main body **62** and the locking nail **133***b* is formed in the front end of the plate spring **133***a*. For example, the sealing portions of the pumps **43** and the valves **41** and **45** are formed in the diaphragm forming member **80** inside the

main body **62** in a plan view. The degree that the sealing portions are inserted and compressed between the sealing portions of the passage forming plate **90** and the cover **70** is increased relatively than the circumference of the main body **62**. Accordingly, a force relatively larger than a force applied to the engagement portions of the locking hooks **66** with the lockable members **132** is applied to the engagement portions of the locking hooks **67** with the lockable members **133** in a direction in which the locking is released. For example, when the force applied in the direction in which the locking is released exceeds a certain value, the locking nail is out of the locking hole of the locking hook and thus the sealing property may not be ensured in the middle of the main body. In some cases, the cover **70** is detached. In this embodiment, however, the plate spring **133***a* formed in the lockable member **133** is deformed in a direction (an upper direction in FIG. **16**) in which the locking hook **67** is released due to the elasticity, as shown in FIG. **16**, this serves as a cushion. Therefore, it is possible to avoid the deviation of the locking. In this case, since a force returning to the original position is applied to the plate spring **133***a*, the sealing portions of the diaphragm forming member **80** are compressed by an appropriate force and thus the sealing property is ensured. Accordingly, it is possible to ensure the sealing property by avoiding the release of the locking of the locking hooks **67**. Moreover, it is possible to prevent the cover **70** from being released.

(5) Since the pumps **43**, the sucking valves **41**, and the ejecting valves **45** are disposed on the same plane, the ink supply system **61** can be formed so as to have the lamination structure. The lamination structure formed by laminating the plural members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, and **130** including the cover **70** and the passage forming plate **90** as the single passage forming member is used. Accordingly, the ink supply system **61** can be provided as the relatively thin component incorporated with the plural ink supply devices **14** including the pumps **43**, the sucking valves **41**, the ejecting valves **45**, and the passages **15***a*, **15***b*, **15***c*, and **15***d*. Accordingly, the piping work is finished just by connecting the air passage tube **46***a* to the tube **106** and attaching a pipe connection tool **59** formed in the front end of the flexible pipe plate extending from the printing head unit **12** to the pipe connection section **63**. As a consequence, since it is not necessary to carry out a piping work for connecting the pumps to the two unidirectional valves (the check valves) and a piping work for connecting the ink supply devices **14** to each other to share a working fluid to a pump between the ink supply devices, for example, a troublesome piping work may not be required and the piping work can be finished in a relatively simple manner.

(6) The passages permitting the pumps **43**, the sucking valves **41**, and the ejecting valves **45** to connect each other are disposed on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** by forming the passage grooves **101** to **105** on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** and welding the film **120** to the rear surface. Accordingly, since the pumps **43**, the sucking valves **41**, and the ejecting valves **45** provided on the front surface of the passage forming plate **90** and the passages **111** to **115** provided on the rear surface and permitting the pumps **43**, the sucking valves **41**, and the ejecting valves **45** to connect each other can be disposed so as to overlap with each other in the lamination direction (the Z direction), the size of the ink supply system **61** can be made compact in a plan view. As a consequence, it is possible to make the size of the ink supply system **61** compact in a plan view. Moreover, since the passages **111** to **115** on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** are disposed on the same plane, the ink supply system **61** is not thick and thus the thinness of the ink supply system **61** can be achieved.

(7) Since the pumps **43** are laid out relative to the ink supply needles **25** so that all the central points of the pumps **43** fall within the cartridge projection range, the space for disposing the ink supply system **61** mounted with the ink cartridges **13** can be relatively small. Moreover, since the valves **41** and **45** are also laid out relative to the ink supply needles **25** so that all the central points of the valves **41** and **45** fall within the cartridge projection range, the space for disposing the ink supply system **61** mounted with the ink cartridges **13** can be smaller.

(8) Since the protective plate **130** is disposed on the rear surface on which the film **120** of the passage forming plate **90** is welded, it is possible to prevent the rippling deformation of the passage forming plate **90** or the like caused because the locking portions of the locking hooks **66** and **67** receive a relatively large force than other portions. Accordingly, the flatness of the sealing surface before and after the locking is maintained and the sealing property of the ink supply system **61** can be ensured. Moreover, since the protective plate **130** is disposed on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90**, it is possible to protect the film **120** welded on the rear surface of the passage forming plate **90** to form the passages.

(9) In the ink supply system **61**, the concave sections **30** and **33** individually forming parts of the valve chambers **41***a* and **45***a* of the sucking valves **41** (the sucking check valve) and the ejecting valve **45** (the ejecting check valve) are formed in the concave shape in the passage forming plate **90** which is the lower case provided with the concave sections **31** each forming a part of the pump chamber **43***a*. With such a configuration, it is possible to make the whole pump mechanism thin and make the ink supply system **61** compact.

For example, when the pump chamber **43***a*, the valve chamber **41***a*, and the valve chamber **45***a* are formed in the passage forming plate **90** (a lower case) without providing the concave section, it is necessary to form a relatively large concave section for forming the valve chamber in the cover **70** (an upper case) and the passage forming plate **90** is required to have the thickness corresponding to the concave section **31** of the pump chamber **43***a* of the passage forming plate **90**. In this way, the lower and upper cases are separated from each other and the concave sections are formed, the thickness is larger and the ink supply system **61** becomes thick. In this embodiment, however, since the concave sections **30** and **32** for the valve chamber **41***a* of the sucking valve **41** and the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45** are provided in the passage forming plate **90** in which the concave sections **31** of the pump chambers **43***a* are formed, the concave section for the valve chamber of the cover **70** can be made thin and it is easy to make at least the portion other than the pumps **43** thin.

(10) The check valve chamber according to this embodiment is configured such that the inflow port to the valve chamber **41***a* is formed by the through-hole **31***b* opened to the bottom surface of the concave section **30** formed in the passage forming plate **90**. In addition, the sucking valve body **36** is configured so as not to block the inflow port upon valve closeness of the sucking valve body **36**. Accordingly, as for the valve chamber **41***a* of the sucking valve **41**, the negative pressure (the ink pressure) from the pump chamber **43***a* upon the sucking drive of the pump is applied to the whole upper surface of the sucking valve body **36**, and the ink pressure of the ink cartridge **13** is also applied to the surface (the lower surface) opposite to the sucking valve body **36** and a broad pressure receiving area with a ring shape. Therefore, due to the differential pressure based on the broad pressure receiving surface in both the surfaces of the sucking valve body **36**, the sucking valve **41** can be opened or closed by a relatively small pressure variation and pressure loss can be reduced. Since the

same is applied to the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45**, the ejecting valve **45** can be opened or closed even by the relatively small pressure variation. On the contrary, in a valve such as a lead valve or a flap valve having a configuration in which the inflow port to each valve chamber is blocked by the valve body, the opening area of the inflow port blocked by the valve body is a pressure receiving area of the valve body. Therefore, when large negative pressure is not applied, it is difficult to surely open the valve. The same is applied to the valve chamber **45***a* of the ejecting valve **45**. As described above, in this embodiment, the check valves of the sucking valve **41** and the ejecting valve **45** have the configuration in which the opening or closing operation can be surely performed even by the small pressure variation, and the pump mechanism can be made thin.

(11) Since all the members **70**, **80**, **90**, **120**, **130**, and **140** are common to the six ink supply devices **14**, the number of constituent elements is reduced and it is easy to assemble the ink supply system **61**.

The invention is not limited to the above-described embodiment, but may be deformed in the following forms.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 1

In the above-described embodiment, the locking hooks **66** and **67** as a locking member are provided in the cover **70** (the second passage forming member **28**) as a second member and the lockable members are provided in the passage forming plate **90** (the first passage forming member **27**) as a first member. However, the locking member and the lockable member may be provided conversely. In short, the locking member and the lockable member which is paired with the locking member may be provided in one and the other of the first and second members, respectively. In this case, in the configuration of the plural locking units, the member provided with the locking member and the member provided with the lockable member may be different from each other between the locking units.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 2

The protective plate **130** may be removed. In this case, the locking members (the locking hooks) provided in one of the cover **70** (the second member) and the passage forming plate **90** (the first member) may engage with the lockable member (the locking nail) provided one thereof. In addition, when the protective plate **130** is removed, a locking force of a degree that the rippling shape of the passage forming member upon locking the locking unit, for example, is not deformed is set. Alternatively, a material having rigidity of a degree that the deformation does not occur upon locking the locking unit is used in the passage forming member.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 3

The plural locking units may be formed by only the lockable members **133** having the plate spring. Alternatively, the plural locking units may be formed by only the lockable members **132** which have no plate spring.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 4

The locking units are provided only at the positions along the circumference of the main body **62** of the ink supply system **61** and only the circumference of the main body **62** may be used as the locking portions.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 5

The receiving plate **140** may be removed. When the film **120** is formed of a material having high solidity, the problem of damage can be prevented without the protective plate. In addition, when the sealing property is completely ensured and thus the ink does not leak, there is no problem with the removal of the receiving plate **140**.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 6

A configuration which does not use the film may be employed. For example, a configuration may be used in which the passage grooves are formed on the surface on the side of the passage forming plate facing the diaphragm forming member **80** and passages are formed by the spatial areas surrounded by the grooves and the diaphragm forming member **80** or passages are formed by holes formed in the passage forming member and extending in a direction perpendicular to the lamination direction. A configuration may be used in which plural passage forming members overlapped in the lamination direction are formed instead of one passage forming plate of the above-described embodiment, grooves are formed on at least one surface of the facing surfaces of plural (for example, two) passage forming members, and the passages are surrounded by the grooves and the facing surfaces upon laminating the plural passage forming plates.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 7

The liquid supply device is not limited to the ink supply system formed by making the plural ink supply devices **14** into one unit. The ink supply device **14** for one color which includes one pump **43**, one sucking valve **41**, and one ejecting valve **45** may be used.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 8

One of the cover **70** and the diaphragm forming member **80** may be the single member. For example, the cover may be formed by plural elements, the diaphragm forming member may be formed by plural elements, or both the cover and the diaphragm forming member may be formed by the same number of elements or a different number of elements. In this case, when the passage forming plate **90** is one component, the ink supply system **61** can be made into one unit.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 9

The ink supply system **61** may not be the cartridge holder. For example, a configuration may be used in which a tube extending from an ink supply source such as an ink tank or the cartridge holder mounted with the ink cartridges is connected to the supply tubes of the ink supply system. Alternatively, an ink supply device including pumps, first unidirectional valves (sucking unidirectional valves), and second unidirectional valves (ejecting unidirectional valves), as in JP-A-2062-272661, may be mounted in the printing head unit. That is, the ink supply system **61** according to the above-described embodiment is mounted on the carriage. With such a configuration, by using the ink supply system **61** having the lamination structure, it is possible to reduce the piping work and make the ink supply device thin.

MODIFIED EXAMPLE 10

In the above-described embodiment, the ink jet printer and the ink cartridge have been used. However, a liquid ejecting

apparatus discharging or ejecting another liquid other than ink and a liquid storing unit storing the liquid may be used. The invention is useful for various liquid ejecting apparatuses including a liquid ejecting head for ejecting minute liquid droplets. The liquid droplet refers to a liquid ejected from the liquid ejecting apparatus and includes a liquid having a particle shape, a liquid having a droplet shape, and a liquid having a thread trailing shape. The liquid is a material which can be ejected by the liquid ejecting apparatus. For example, the liquid is a matter in a liquefied state and includes a liquid of a fluid state such as a liquid-like material having high or low viscosity, sol, gel water, other inorganic solvents, an organic solvent, liquid solution, liquid-like resin, and liquid-like metal (metallic melt), a liquid in one state of a matter, and a liquid in which particles of a functional material formed of a solid matter such as colorant or metal particle is dissolved, dispersed, or mixed. Representative examples of a liquid are ink or liquid crystal, as described in the embodiment. Here, the ink includes a liquid composition such as general water-based ink, general oil-based ink, gel ink, and hot-melt ink. Specific examples of the liquid ejecting apparatus include a liquid crystal display, an EL (electro-luminescence) display, a plane emission display, a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting a liquid containing a material such as an electrode material or a color material used to manufacture a color filter is dispersed or dissolved, a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting bio organism used to manufacture a bio chip, a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting a liquid as a sample used by a precise pipette, a printing apparatus, and a micro dispenser. In addition, examples of the liquid ejecting apparatus include a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting a lubricant to a precision instrument such as a clock or a camera by a pin point, a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting a transparent resin liquid such as ultraviolet cured resin on a board to form a minute hemispheric lens (an optical lens) used in an optical communication element or the like, and a liquid ejecting apparatus ejecting an acid or alkali etching liquid to etch a board or the like. In addition, the invention is applicable to one liquid ejecting thereof and the liquid storing unit.

The technical sprints understood from the above-described embodiment and the modified examples will be described below.

(1) In the liquid supply device, the flexible member includes the diaphragms of the supply pumps and valve portions of the unidirectional valves.

(2) In the liquid supply device, a connection section (**25**) for connecting a supply port of the liquid storing member (**13**) is provided on the outer surface of at least one of the first and second members. With such a configuration, since the connection port of the liquid supply source is directly connected to the liquid supply connection section, a tube or the like is not required to connect the liquid supply source and the liquid supply connection section to each other.

(3) In the liquid supply device according to technical spirit (**2**), the liquid supply source is a liquid cartridge storing a liquid, the connection section is a liquid supply needle inserted into the supply port of the liquid storing member, and the liquid supply device is a cartridge holder mounted with the liquid cartridge in which the liquid supply needle is inserted into the supply port of the liquid cartridge. With such a configuration, since the liquid supply device is formed such that the pumps and the unidirectional valves are assembled in the cartridge holder on which the liquid supply source (the liquid cartridge) is directly mounted, it is not necessary to pipe a tube or the like for connecting the liquid supply source to the liquid supply device.

What is claimed is:

1. A liquid supply device comprising:

a supply pump which is provided in a liquid supply passage;

a first unidirectional valve which is provided on an upstream side of the supply pump;

a second unidirectional valve which is provided on a downstream side of the supply pump;

a first member;

a second member; and

a flexible member,

wherein the supply pump and the first and second unidirectional valves are formed such that the flexible member is part of the pump and the first and second unidirectional valves such that flexible member is interposed between the first and second members and held by locking a locking unit in the state where the flexible member is interposed between the first and second members.

2. The liquid supply device according to claim **1**, wherein the locking unit holds a plurality of members including the first and second members by locking and includes a locking member which is provided in one outer member of the plurality of members and a lockable member which is provided in another outer member thereof disposed opposite to the one outer member and engages with the locking member.

3. The liquid supply device according to claim **2**, wherein a metal plate which is one of the plurality of members is disposed on the surface of at least one of the first and second members opposite to the flexible member, and the locking member locks the lockable member formed on the metal plate.

4. The liquid supply device according to claim **2**, wherein the lockable member has a plate spring which is elastically deformable.

5. The liquid supply device according to claim **2**, wherein the locking unit includes first locking members which lock at a plurality of positions in the circumference of a main body formed by interposing the flexible member between the first and second members and second locking members which lock at locking positions located more inside than the locking positions of the first locking members in the main body.

6. The liquid supply device according to claim **5**, wherein the second locking member has a plate spring.

7. The liquid supply device according to claim **5**, further comprising:

a plurality of liquid supply units which each include the supply pump and the first and second unidirectional valves,

wherein plural pairs of the supply pumps and the first and second unidirectional valves individually forming the plurality of liquid supply units are disposed on the substantially same plane,

wherein at least one of the first and second members is provided with concave sections for each forming a part of each chamber of the supply pump and each unidirectional valve, and

wherein the locking positions of the second locking members are located in gap areas where the concave sections are not disposed.

8. The liquid supply device according to claim **1**,

wherein at least one of the first and second members has a groove on a surface opposite to the flexible member,

wherein a part of the liquid supply passage is formed on a surface of at least one of the first and second members

opposite to the supply pumps by a spatial area surrounded by the groove and a blocking member by fixing the blocking member on the surface provided with the groove in a sealed state, and

wherein the locking positions of the locking unit are located in gap areas where a part of the liquid supply passage is not formed.

9. A liquid ejecting apparatus comprising:

the liquid supply device according to claim **1**; and

a liquid ejecting unit which ejects a liquid supplied from the liquid supply device.

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